MONERGISM BOOKS

JOHN OWEN

AN EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS



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HEBREWS 6:1-7:28

An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews

Hebrews 6:1-7:28



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JOHN OWEN

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CHAPTER 6

THIS whole chapter is a continuation of the digression which the apostle had occasionally entered into in the 11th verse of the preceding chapter. For upon the consideration of the greatness of the mystery and difficulty of the doctrine which he designed to instruct these Hebrews in, and his fear of their disability or unpreparedness (at least of some) to receive it in a due manner unto their edification, he engageth into a new discourse, filled up with reasons and arguments to excite them unto a diligent attendance. And this he so doth, as in the very last words of this chapter to return, by an artificial connection of his discourse, unto what he had asserted in the 10th verse of that foregoing.

There are four general parts of this chapter:—1. The proposition of what he intended to do, or discourse concerning; with an opposition thereunto of what was by him to be omitted, verses 1–3. 2. An excitation of the Hebrews unto singular diligence in attending unto the most perfect doctrines of Christianity, and making a progress in the knowledge of Christ. And this he doth from the consideration of the greatness of the sin and the inevitableness of the destruction of apostates. For this sort of persons do commonly arise from among such as, having received the truth, and made a profession thereof, do not diligently endeavour a progress towards perfection, according to their duty, verses 4–8. 3. A lenifying of the severity of this commination in respect of its application unto these Hebrews. For he expresseth his hope that it did not so belong unto them, or that the sin condemned should not be found in them, nor the punishment threatened fall on them. But the warning itself contained in the commination was, as he shows, good, wholesome, and seasonable. And of this his hope and judgment concerning the Hebrews he expresseth his grounds, taken from the righteousness of God, their own faith and love; which he prays they may persevere in, verses 9–12. 4. An encouragement unto faith and perseverance, from the example of Abraham, who first received the promises; from the nature of the promises themselves, and their confirmation by the oath

of God, with the assistance we may have by our hope in Christ thereunto, verses 13–20; which last discourse he issueth in the principal matter he intended to insist upon, whereunto he now returns again, having digressed necessarily into those exhortations and arguings from the first proposal of it in the 11th verse of the foregoing chapter.

In the first part of the chapter, comprised in the first three verses, there are three things considerable:—1. A general proposition of the apostle's resolution to proceed unto the more perfect doctrines of the gospel, as also of his passing over the first principles of Christianity, verse 1. 2. An amplification of this proposition, by an enumeration of those doctrines which he thought meet at present to pass by the handling of, verses 1, 2. 3. A renovation of his resolution to pursue his proposition, with a submission to the will and good pleasure of God as to the execution of his purpose; the expression whereof the present state of these Hebrews peculiarly called him unto, verse 3.

Hebrews 6:1

Διὸ ὀφέντες τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον, ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα.

Διό, "ideo," "quapropter," "propterea;" "wherefore." Ἀφέντες, "intermittentes," Ari., Vulg. Lat., Rhem., "intermitting:" as though the apostle laid these things aside only for the present, with a resolution to take them up again in this epistle; but neither doth the word signify any such thing nor doth he so do. "Relinquentes," Bez., "leaving." Syr., נֶשְׁבּוֹק, "emittamus," or "demittamus;" "dismissing," properly. Τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον. Arias, "sermonem initii Christi." Vulg., "inchoationis Christi." "The word of the beginning of Christ," as the Rhemists; very obscurely in Latin, and in our language. Erasm., "omisso qui in Christo rudes inchoat sermone;" "the word that entereth those that are unskilful," or, "beginners in Christ." So also Beza. We, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ." Syr., "the beginning of the word of Christ," for "the word of the beginning of Christ." The word of, or that which concerns the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα. Φερώμεθα, "feramur," "let us be carried on." Syr., "נֶאֱתֵא, "let us come to." Arab., "let us lift up ourselves." Rhem., "let us proceed." Ours, "let us go on unto perfection."

Ver. 1.—Wherefore, leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, let us be carried on to perfection.

Διό, "wherefore." This illative manifests that there is a dependence in what ensues on what was discoursed of before. That which follows may be either an inference from it, or be the effect of a resolution occasioned by it. "Wherefore;"—that is either, 'This duty will hence follow;' or, 'Seeing it is so, I am thus resolved to do.' And this connection is variously apprehended, on the account of the ambiguity of the expression in the plural number and first person. Ἀφέντες ... φερώμεθα,—"We leaving, let us go on." For in this kind of expression there is a rhetorical communication; and the apostle either assumes the Hebrews unto himself as to his work, or joins himself with them as to their duty. For if the words be taken the first way, they declare his resolution in teaching; if in the latter, their duty in learning.

First, And if we take the words in the first way, as expressing the apostle's resolution as to his own work, the inference seems to have an immediate dependence on the 11th verse of the preceding chapter, passing by the discourse of the following verses as a digression, to be as it were included in a parenthesis: ' "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull in hearing;" I shall therefore, for your future instruction, "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and go on unto more sublime mysteries, or the wisdom that we speak among them that are perfect.' For although he had blamed them for their dulness and backwardness in learning, yet he doth not declare them, at least not all of them, to be such as were uncapable of these mysteries, so as that he ought not to communicate them unto them. This is the meaning of the words, if the apostle assume the Hebrews unto himself, and if it be his work that is intended.

Secondly, If in the latter way the apostle join himself unto the Hebrews, and it is their duty which is intended, namely, that they should not always dwell on the first principles or lessons of Christianity, but press on unto perfection, then, —1. This illative, διό, seems to have respect unto the time, in the first place, which these Hebrews had enjoyed under the means of growth in the knowledge of Christ; on the account whereof he affirms that it might be justly expected concerning them that they should be teachers of others. ' "Therefore," saith he, or on the consideration hereof, 'it is just and equal that you should go on towards perfection;' which that they would do, he expresseth his hopes concerning them, verse 9. 2. It respects also that negligence, and sloth, and backwardness to learn, which he had reproved in them. As if he had said, 'Seeing, therefore, you have hitherto been so careless in the improvement of the

means which you have enjoyed,—which hath been no small fault or evil in you, but that which hath tended greatly to your disadvantage,—now at last stir up yourselves unto your duty, and go on to perfection.'

We need not precisely to determine this connection, so as to exclude either intention; yea, it may be the apostle, having respect unto the preceding discourse, and considering thereon both the present condition of the Hebrews, as also the necessity that there was of instructing them in the mystery of the priesthood of Christ,—without the knowledge whereof they could not be freed from their entanglements unto the Aaronical priesthood and ceremonies, which were yet in use and exercise among them,—doth intend in this inference from thence both his own duty and theirs; that he should proceed unto their further instruction, and that they should stir up themselves to learn and profit accordingly. This, the duty of his office and care of them, and this their advantage and edification, required; for this alone was the great means and expedient to bring them off in a due manner, and upon right grounds, from that compliance with Judaism which God would now no longer connive at, nor tolerate the practice of, as that which was inconsistent with the nature and design of the gospel. And it is apparent, that before the writing of this epistle, they were not sufficiently convinced that there was an absolute end put unto all Mosaical institutions; for notwithstanding their profession of the gospel, they still thought it their duty to abide in the observation of them. But now the apostle designs their instruction in that mystery which particularly evinceth their inconsistency with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience unto him.

Ἀφέντες, Ἀφέντες, "omittentes," "relinquentes;" we, "leaving." Ἀφίημι is sometimes "dimitto," to "dismiss," to "discharge," or "let go;" sometimes "omitto," "missum facio," to "omit," to "pass by." And it is used with respect unto speech of things that have been already mentioned. Τούτων ἀφέμενοι τῶν λόγων, in Lucian, "omitting these discourses,"—laying aside further speech concerning these things. So is it here used by our apostle. But the signification of the word is to be limited unto the present occasion; for consider the things here spoken of absolutely, and they are never to be left, either by teachers or hearers. There is a necessity that teachers should often insist on the rudiments or first principles of religion; and this not only with respect unto them who are continually to be trained up in knowledge from their infancy, or unto such as may be newly converted, but also they are occasionally to be inculcated on the minds of those who have made a farther progress in knowledge. And this course we find our

apostle to have steered in all his epistles. Nor are any hearers so to leave these principles as to forget them, or not duly to make use of them. Cast aside a constant regard unto them in their proper place, and no progress can be made in knowledge, no more than a building can be carried on when the foundation is taken away. But respect is had on both sides unto the present occasion. 'Let us not always dwell upon the teaching and learning of these things, but "omitting" them for a season, as things that you are, or might be, well acquainted withal, let us proceed unto what is further necessary for you.'

Obs. I. It is the duty of ministers of the gospel to take care, not only that their doctrine they preach be true, but also that it be seasonable with respect unto the state and condition of their hearers.

Herein consists no small part of that wisdom which is required in the dispensation of the word. Truths unseasonable are like showers in harvest. It is "a word spoken in season" that is beautiful and useful, Prov. 25:11; yea, "every thing is beautiful in its own time," and not else, Eccles. 3:11. And two things are especially to be considered by him who would order his doctrine aright, that his words may be fit, meet, and seasonable: 1. The condition of his hearers, as to their present knowledge and capacity. Suppose them to be persons, as the apostle speaks, of "full age," such as can receive and digest "strong meat,"—that have already attained some good acquaintance with the mysteries of the gospel. In preaching unto such an auditory, if men, through want of ability to do otherwise, or want of wisdom to know when they ought to do otherwise, shall constantly treat of first principles, or things common and obvious, it will not only be unuseful unto their edification, but also at length make them weary of the ordinance itself. And there will be no better effect on the other side, where the hearers being mostly weak, the more abstruse mysteries of truth are insisted on, without a prudent accommodation of matters suited unto their capacity. It is, therefore, the duty of stewards in the house of God to give unto his household their proper portion. This is the blessed advice our apostle gives to Timothy, 2 Tim. 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας,"—"rightly cutting out the word of truth." This is that whereby a minister may evince himself to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed:"—if as, when the beasts that were sacrificed were cut into pieces, the priest according to the law disposed of the parts of them, unto the altar, himself, and them that brought them, that each in the division might have his proper and legal portion; so he give out a due and proper part unto his hearers,

he is an approved workman. Others cast all things into confusion and disorder; which will at length redound unto their own shame. Now, whereas in all churches, auditories, or congregations, there is so great a variety of hearers, with respect unto their present attainments, knowledge, and capacities, so that it is impossible that any one should always, or indeed very frequently, accommodate his matter and way of instruction to them all; it were greatly to be desired that there might be, as there was in the primitive church, a distribution made of hearers into several orders or ranks, according as their age or means of knowledge do sort them, that so the edification of all might be distinctly provided for. So would it be, if it were the work of some separately to instruct those who yet stand in need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God, and of others to build up towards perfection those who have already made some progress in the knowledge of the gospel; or the same work may be done by the same persons at several seasons. Nor doth any thing hinder but that those who are strong may be occasionally present at the instructions of the weak, and the latter at the teachings of the former, both to their great advantage. In the meantime, until this can be attained, it is the duty and wisdom of a minister to apply himself, in the doctrine he preacheth, and the manner of his delivery, unto the more general state of his hearers, as by him it is apprehended or known. And as it will be a trouble unto him who esteems it his duty to go forward in the declaration of the mysteries of the gospel, to fear that many stay behind, as being unable to receive and digest the food he hath provided; so it should be a shame to them who can make no provision but of things trite, ordinary, and common, when many, perhaps, among their hearers are capable of feeding on better or more solid provision. Again,—2. The circumstances of the present time are duly to be considered by them who would preach doctrine that should be seasonable unto their hearers; and these are many, not here to be particularly insisted on. But those especially of known public temptations, of prevalent errors and heresies, of especial opposition and hatred unto any important truths, are always to be regarded; for I could easily manifest that the apostle in his epistles hath continually an especial respect unto them all. Neither was a due consideration hereof ever more necessary than it is in the days wherein we live. And other things may be added of the like nature unto this purpose. Again,—

Obs. II. Some important doctrines of truth may, in the preaching of the gospel, be omitted for a season, but none must ever be forgotten or neglected.—So deals the apostle in this place, and light hath been sufficiently given us hereinto by what hath already been discoursed.

Τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον. That which is passed over here he calls τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον, "sermonem de Christo initiantem;" "sermo exordii Christi;" "sermo quo instituuntur rudes in Christo." We say, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," I fear somewhat improperly; for "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" indefinitely must include all, at least the most principal, of those which are so. Ὁ λόγος, "the word;" that is, the word preached. So ὁ λόγος is frequently used, 1 Cor. 1:18. And the name "Christ" is not taken here personally, neither efficiently, as though "of Christ," should be 'whereof Christ is the author,' nor objectively concerning Christ; but it is taken metonymically for the doctrine of the gospel, and the profession of that religion which was taught by him. So that "the word of Christ" is no more but the doctrine of the gospel as preached and taught. Τῆς ἀρχῆς containeth a limitation of this doctrine with respect unto some parts of it; that is, those which men usually and ordinarily were first instructed in, and which, from their own nature, it was necessary that so they should be. These are here called "the word of the beginning of Christ." And what these doctrines are, the apostle declares particularly in the end of this verse, and in the next, where we shall inquire into them. They are the same with "the first principles of the oracles of God," whereof mention was made before. Having declared what for the present he would omit and pass by, although there was some appearance of a necessity to the contrary, the apostle expresseth what his present design in general was, and what was the end which therein he aimed at. Now this was, that, not being retarded by the repetition or re-inculcation of the things which he would therefore omit, they might (he in teaching, they in learning) "go on to perfection." And two things must be considered:—1. The end intended; 2. The manner of pressing towards it.

Εἰς την τελειότητα. The end is τελειότης, "perfection;" that is, such a knowledge of the mysterious and sublime doctrines of the gospel as those who were completely initiated and thoroughly instructed were partakers of. Of this he says, Σοφίαν λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, 1 Cor. 2:6;—"We speak wisdom among the perfect;" or, 'declare the deep mysteries of the gospel, "the wisdom of God in a mystery," unto them that are capable of them.' It is, then, a perfection that the apostle aims at; but such as comes under a double limitation:—1. From the nature of the thing itself. It is only an intellectual perfection, a perfection of the

mind in knowledge, that is intended. And this may be where there is not a moral, gracious, sinless perfection. Yea, men may have great light in their minds, whilst their wills and affections are very much depraved, and their lives unreformed. 2. It is a comparative, and not an absolute perfection. An absolute perfection, in the comprehension of the whole mystery of God in Christ, is not by us attainable in this life. The apostle denies it concerning himself, Phil. 3:12. But such a degree and measure as God is pleased to communicate to believers in the ordinary use of means, is that which is intended. See Eph. 4:12, 13. Take, therefore, the perfection here aimed at objectively, and it is the more sublime mysteries of the gospel which it expresseth; take it subjectively, it is such a clear perception of them, especially of those which concern the person and offices of Christ, and particularly his priesthood, as grown believers do usually attain unto.

Φερώμεθα. The manner of arriving at this end he expresseth by φερώμεθα. And in this word is the rhetorical communication mentioned. For either he ascribes that unto himself with them which belonged only unto them; or that unto them which belonged only unto him; or what belonged unto them both, but in a different way,—namely, unto him in teaching, unto them in learning. "Let us be carried on." The word is emphatical, intimating such a kind of progress as a ship makes when it is under sail. "Let us be carried on;" that is, with the full bent of our minds and affections, with the utmost endeavours of our whole souls. 'We have abode long enough by the shore; let us now hoist our sails and launch forth into the deep.' And we may hence learn, that,—

Obs. III. It is a necessary duty of the dispensers of the gospel to excite their hearers, by all pressing considerations, to make a progress in the knowledge of the truth. Thus dealeth our apostle with these Hebrews. He would not have them always stand at the porch, but enter into the sanctuary, and behold the hidden glories of the house of God. Elsewhere he complains of those who are "always learning,"—that is, in the way of it, under the means of it; but yet, by reason of their negligence and carelessness in the application of their minds unto them, do "never come εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας," 2 Tim. 3:7,—to a clear knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. And in the same spirit he complains of his Corinthians for their want of proficiency in spiritual things, so that he was forced in his dealing with them to dwell still on the rudiments of religion, 1 Cor. 3:1, 2. In all his epistles he is continually, as it were, pressing this on the churches, that they should labour to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and that they might do so,

was the principal matter of his prayers for them, Eph. 3:14–19, 1:15–19; Col. 2:1, 2. And they are utter strangers to his spirit and example who are careless in this matter, especially such as persuade and even compel others so to be. Wherefore this duty is necessary unto dispensers of the gospel on sundry accounts:—

1. Because their hearers do greatly need the exercise of it. They are apt to be slothful and weary; many begin to run well, but are quickly ready to faint. There is no reckoning up the occasions hereof, they are so many and various. Weariness of the flesh; self-conceit of having attained what is sufficient, perhaps more than others; curiosity and itching ears, in attending unto novelties; dislike of that holiness and fruitfulness of life which an increase of knowledge openly tends unto; misspending on the one hand, or covetousness of time for the occasions of life on the other; any prevailing corruption of mind or affections; the difficulty that is in coming to the knowledge of the truth in a due manner, making the sluggard cry, "There is a lion in the streets;" with other things innumerable, are ready and able to retard, hinder, and discourage men in their progress. And if there be none to excite, warn, and admonish them; to discover the variety of the pretences whereby men in this matter deceive themselves; to lay open the snares and dangers which hereby they cast themselves into; to mind them of the excellency of the things of the gospel and the knowledge of them, which are proposed before them; it cannot be but that by these means their spiritual condition will be prejudiced, if not their souls ruined. Yea, sometimes men are so captivated under the power of these temptations and seductions, and are furnished with such pleas in the defence of their own sloth and negligence, as that they must be dealt wisely and gently withal in admonitions concerning them, lest they be provoked or discouraged. Hence our apostle having dealt effectually with these Hebrews about these things, shuts up his discourse with that blessed expression of love and condescension towards them, chap. 13:22, "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation,—ἀνέχεσθε:" 'So bear with it, as that which, however it may be contrary to your present inclinations, yet proceeds out of tender love to your souls, and hath no other end but your spiritual advantage.' Neither ought this to abate herein the endeavours of faithful ministers, but only give them further occasion to stir up and exercise their prudence and diligence.

2. The advantages which professors have by a progress in the knowledge of spiritual things, make it a necessary duty to stir them up and lead them on therein, unto them who are obliged in all things to watch for the good of their souls. And these advantages also present themselves in so much variety, that

they cannot be here recounted. Mention may be made of some few in a way of instance; as, (1.) Hereon, in a way of an effectual means, depends the security of men from seduction into heresies, noisome and noxious errors. Of what sort are they whom we see seduced every day? Are they not persons who either are brutishly ignorant of the very nature of Christian religion, and the first principles of it,—with which sort the Papists fill the rolls of their converts; or such as have obtained a little superficiary knowledge, and confidence therein, without ever laying a firm foundation, or carrying on an orderly superstruction thereon in wisdom and obedience,—which sort of men fill up the assemblies of the Quakers? The foundation of God standeth sure at all times,—God knoweth who are his; and he will so preserve his elect as to render their total seduction impossible. But in an ordinary way, it will be very difficult in such a time as this, —when seducers abound, false doctrines are divulged and speciously obtruded, wherein there are so many wolves abroad in sheep's clothing, and so great an opposition is on all hands made to the truth of the gospel,—for any to hold out firm and unshaken unto the end, if their minds be not inlaid and fortified with a sound, well-grounded knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. It is the teaching of the Spirit, the unction of the Holy One, whereby, we know all necessary truths, that must preserve us in such a season, 1 John 2:27. (2.) Proportionable unto our growth in knowledge will be our increase in holiness and obedience. If this at any time fall out otherwise, it is from the sins and wickedness of the persons in whom it is; in the nature of the things themselves, they thus depend on one another. See Eph. 4:21–24; Rom. 12:2. That "ignorance is the mother of devotion," is a maxim that came from hell to fetch the souls of men, and has carried back multitudes with it; where let it abide. Now the reason why the improvement of knowledge doth tend unto the improvement of holiness and obedience, is because faith acts itself on Christ only in and by the things which we know, whereby spiritual strength is derived unto us, and we are enabled unto them. (3.) Usefulness in the church, unto our families, and amongst all men, depends hereon. This needs no other confirmation than what the experience of every man will suggest unto him. And if I should design to go over but the principal advantages which we attain, or may do so, in the growth of spiritual light and knowledge, there is not any thing wherein our faith or obedience is concerned; nothing that belongs unto our graces, duties, or communion with God, in them or by them; nothing wherein we are concerned in temptations, afflictions, or consolation, but might be justly called in to give testimony thereunto. If, therefore, the ministers of the gospel have any care for,

or any love unto the souls of their hearers; if they understand any thing of the nature of the office and work which they have taken on themselves, or the account they must one day give of the discharge of it; they cannot but esteem it among the most necessary duties incumbent on them, to excite, provoke, persuade, and carry on, those who are under their charge towards the perfection before described.

There is therefore nothing, in the whole combination against Christ and the gospel which is found in the Papacy, of a more pernicious nature and tendency than is the design of keeping the people in ignorance. So far are they from promoting the knowledge of Christ in the members of their communion, that they endeavour by all means to obstruct it; for, not to mention their numerous errors and heresies, every one whereof is a diversion from the truth, and a hinderance from coming to an acquaintance with it, they do directly keep from them the use of those means whereby alone its knowledge may be attained. What else means their prohibition of the people from reading the Scripture in a language they understand? The most expeditious course for the rendering of all streams unuseful, is by stopping of the fountain. And whereas all means of the increase of knowledge are but emanations from the Scripture, the prohibition of the use thereof doth effectually evacuate them all. Was this spirit in our apostle? had he this design? It is evident to all how openly and frequently he expresseth himself to the contrary. And to his example ought we to conform ourselves. Whatever other occasion of writing he had, the principal subject of his epistles is constantly the increase of light and knowledge in the churches, which he knew to be so necessary for them. We may therefore add,—

Obs. IV. The case of that people is deplorable and dangerous whose teachers are not able to carry them on in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. The key of knowledge may be taken away by ignorance as well as malice. And so it is with many. And when knowledge is perished from their lips who should preserve it, the people must perish for want of that knowledge, Hos. 4:6; Matt. 15:14.

Obs. V. In our progress towards an increase in knowledge, we ought to go on with diligence and the full bent of our wills and affections.

I intend hereby to express the sense of φερώμεθα. It is of a passive signification, denoting the effect, "Let us be acted, carried on;" but it includes the active use of means for the producing that effect. And the duties on our part intended may be reduced unto these heads,—

1. Diligence in an application unto the use of the best means for this end, Hos. 6:3. Those that would be carried on towards perfection must not be careless, or regardless of opportunities of instruction, nor be detained from them by sloth or vanity, nor diverted by the businesses and occasions of this world. Both industry in their pursuit, and choice in the preferring of them before secular advantages and avocations, are required hereunto.

2. Intension of mind in the attending unto them. Such persons are neither to be careless of them nor careless under them. There are who will take no small pains to enjoy the means of instruction, and will scarce miss an opportunity that they can reach unto; but when they have so done, there they sit down and rest. It is a shame, to consider how little they stir up their minds and understandings to conceive aright and apprehend the things wherein they are instructed. So do they continue to hear from day to day, and from year to year, but are not carried on one step towards perfection. If both heart and head be not set at work, and the utmost endeavours of our minds improved, in searching, weighing, pondering, learning, treasuring up the truths that we are taught by any means of divine appointment, we shall never make the progress intended.

3. There is required hereunto, that our wills and affections be sincerely inclined unto and fixed on the things themselves that we are taught. These are the principal wings or sails of our souls, whereby we are, or may be, carried on in our voyage. Without this all that we do will amount to nothing, or that which is no better. To love the truth, the things proposed unto us in the doctrine of it; to delight in them; to find a goodness, desirableness, excellency, and suitableness unto the condition of our souls in them; and therefore to adhere and cleave unto them; is that which will make us prosper in our progress. He that knows but a little and loves much, will quickly know and love more. And he that hath much knowledge but little love, will find that he labours in the fire for the increase of the one or other. When, in the diligent use of means, our wills and affections do adhere and cleave with delight unto the things wherein we are instructed, then are we in our right course; then if the holy gales of the Spirit of God do breathe on us, are we in a blessed tendency towards perfection. 2 Thess. 2:10.

4. The diligent practice of what we know is no less necessary unto the duty pressed on us. This is the next and immediate end of all teaching and all learning. This is that which renders our knowledge our happiness: "If ye know

these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Doing what we know is the great key to give us an entrance into knowing what we do not. If we do the will of God, we shall know of his word, John 7:17. And,—

5. All these are to be managed with a certain design and prospect towards this end, of growing in grace and knowledge, and that until we arrive at the measure of our perfection appointed unto us in Jesus Christ. In these ways, and by these means, we may attain the effect directly expressed, of being carried on in the increase of spiritual light and knowledge, and not without them.

Hebrews 6:1-2

In the remainder of the first verse and the next that follows, the apostle declares in particular instances what were the things and doctrines which he called in general before, "the beginning of the doctrine of Christ," whose further handling he thought meet at present to omit.

Ver. 1, 2.—Μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων, καὶ πίστεως ἐπὶ Θεὸν, βαττισμῶν διδαχῆς, ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν, ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν, καὶ κρίματος αἰωνίου.

The Syriac translation proposeth these words in the way of an interrogation, "Will you again lay another foundation?" and the Ethiopic, omitting the first clause, in the way of a precept, "Attend therefore again to the foundation, that you dispute not concerning repentance from dead works, in the faith of God." But neither the text nor scope of the apostle will bear either of these interpretations.

Μὴ πάλιν. Syr., אָו לְמָאתִיב, "an numquid rursum?" or "whether again?" All others, "non rursum," "non iterum." Arab., "nec amplius," "not again;" not any more. Θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι. Syr., שָׁתַאסְתָּא אַחֲרִיתָא מַרְמוּן, "will you lay another foundation?" That term of "another," is both needless, because of "again" that went before, and corrupts the sense, as though a foundation different from what was formerly laid were intended. Besides, that is made an expostulation with the Hebrews which is indeed expressive of the apostle's intention, "fundamentum jacientes," "laying the foundation." Μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων. Syr., "unto repentance from dead works;" and so in all the following instances. There is no difference among translators about the rest of the words. Only the Ethiopic reads "baptism," in the singular number, as the Syriac doth, and placeth "doctrine" distinctly by way of apposition: "baptism, doctrine, and the imposition of hands." Ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν, the Syriac

renders by an Hebraism, קְיָמְתָא דְמֵן בֵּית מַיְתֵא, "the resurrection that is from the house of the dead;" that is, the grave, the common dwelling-place of the dead: as also, κρίματος αἰωνίου by דִינָא דְלְעָלַם, "the judgment which is for ever;" the sentence whereof is eternally irrevocable, and whose execution endures always.

Ver. 1, 2.—Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of baptisms, doctrine, and the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

There are two things in these words added concerning "the doctrine of the principles of Christ," or "the first doctrines of Christianity:" 1. Their general nature with respect to the whole truth of the gospel, metaphorically expressed; they are the "foundation." 2. Their nature in particular is declared in sundry instances; not that all of them are mentioned, but these instances are chosen out to show of what kind they are. In the first, two things are proposed: 1. The expression of the thing itself intended, which is "the foundation." 2. The apostle's design with respect unto it, "not laying it again."

Θεμέλιον. FIRST, Μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι. Θεμέλιος is, as was said, in this matter metaphorical, including an allusion unto an architect and his building. First he lays the foundation; and he is a most foolish builder who either doth not so, or who rests therein, or who is always setting it up and pulling it down, without making a progress. Indeed, that foundation which is all the building, which hath not an edifice erected on it, is no foundation; for that which is materially so, becomes so formally only with respect unto the building upon it. And those who receive the doctrines of Christ here called the "foundation," if they build not on them, they will prove none unto them, whatever they are in themselves.

There are two properties of a foundation:—1. That it is that which is first laid in every building. This the natural order of every building requires. 2. It is that which bears the whole weight of the superstructure; the whole, and all the parts of it, being laid upon it, and firmly united unto it. With respect unto the one or other of these properties, or both, are the doctrines intended called the "foundation." But in the latter sense they cannot be so. It is Christ himself, and he only, who is so the foundation as to bear the weight and to support the whole building of the church of God. Isa. 28:16; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:10, 11; Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5. He is so personally, the life and being of the church consisting in its spiritual union unto his person, 1 Cor. 12:12; and doctrinally, in that all truth is

resolved into what is taught concerning him, 1 Cor. 3:10, 13. Wherefore it is in allusion unto a foundation with respect unto its first property, namely, that it is first laid in the building, that these doctrines are called "the foundation" (so the Jews term the general principles of their profession יסודי תורה, "the foundations of the law," or the principal doctrines taught therein),—the first doctrines which are necessary to be received and professed at men's first entrance into Christianity. And the apostle intends the same things by the threefold expression which he maketh use of:—1. Στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ, chap. 5:12,—"the first principles of the oracles of God:" 2. Ὁ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγος: and, 3. Θεμέλιος, chap. 6:1;—"the beginning of the doctrine of Christ," and "the foundation."

Μὴ παλιν καταβαλλόμενοι. Concerning these things he says, Μὴ παλιν καταβαλλόμενοι, "not laying it again." His saying that he would not lay it again, doth not infer that he himself had laid it before amongst them, but only that it was so laid before by some or other. For it was not by him that they received their first instruction, nor doth he mention any such thing in the whole epistle; whereas he frequently pleads it unto those churches which were planted by himself, 1 Cor. 3:5, 6, 10, 4:15. And it is known from the story that his ministry was not used in their first conversion. But he knew that they had faithful instructors, who would not leave them unacquainted with these necessary things; and that they would not have been initiated by baptism, or admitted into the church, without a profession of them. Besides, they were such as in general they owned in their former church-state. He might, therefore, well say that he would not lay this foundation again. 'These things,' saith he, 'you have already been instructed in by others, and therefore I will not (as also on other considerations) go over them again.' Wherefore let the hearers of the gospel carefully look to it, that they learn those things whereof they have had sufficient instruction; for if any evil ensue from their ignorance of them, they must themselves answer for it. Such ignorance is their sin, as well as their disadvantage. Preachers may take it for granted, that what they have sedulously and sufficiently instructed their hearers in, they have also received and learned, because it is through their sinful negligence if they have not so done. And they are not bound always to wait on some in their negligences, to the disadvantage of others.

SECONDLY, The apostle declares in particular what were those doctrinal principles, which he had in general so described, which were taught unto them who were first initiated into Christianity, and which he will not now again insist upon. "Repentance from dead works," etc.

We must first consider the order of these words, and then their sense, or the things themselves intended. Some here reckon up six principles, some make them seven, some but four, and by some they are reduced unto three.

The first two are plain and distinct, "Repentance from dead works," and "faith towards God." The next that follow are disputed as to their coherence and sense: Βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν. Some read these words with a note of distinction between them, βαπτισμῶν, διδαχῆς, both the genitive cases being regulated by θεμέλιον, "The foundation of baptisms, and of doctrine;" which are put together by apposition, not depending one upon another. Διδαχή is "the preaching of the word." And this was one of the first things wherein believers were to be instructed,—namely, that they were to abide ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ, Acts 2:42; in a constant attendance unto the doctrine of the gospel, when preached unto them. And as I shall not assert this exposition, so I dare not positively reject it, as not seeing any reason cogent to that purpose. But another sense is more probable.

Take the words in conjunction, so as that one of them should depend on and be regulated by the other, and then, 1. We may consider them in their order as they lie in the original: Βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς ἐπιθέσώς τε χειρῶν (supposing the first to be regulated by θεμέλιος, and both the latter by it),—"The baptisms of doctrine and imposition of hands." There were two things peculiar to the gospel,—the doctrine of it, and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Doctrine is compared to and called baptism, Deut. 32:2; hence the people were said to be "baptized unto Moses," when they were initiated into his doctrines, 1 Cor. 10:1, 2. The baptism of John was his doctrine, Acts 19:3. And the baptism of Christ was the doctrine of Christ, wherewith he was to "sprinkle many nations," Isa. 52:15. This is the first baptism of the gospel, even its doctrine. The other was the communication of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Acts 1:5. That this, and this alone, is intended by "the laying on of hands," I shall prove fully afterwards. And then the sense would be, 'The foundation of gospel baptisms,—namely, preaching, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.' And I know but one argument against this sense,—namely, that it is new and singular. To avoid this, 2. The order of the words must be inverted in their exposition. Not the "baptisms of

doctrine," but the "doctrine of baptisms," must be intended. But then two things must be observed:—(1.) That βαπτισμῶν, "baptisms," is not immediately regulated by θεμέλιον, the "foundation;" and so "baptisms" are not asserted absolutely to be a foundation, as is "repentance from dead works," but only the doctrine about it is so. (2.) It cannot be readily conceived why διδαχή, "doctrine," should be prefixed unto "baptisms" alone, and not to "repentance" and "faith," the doctrines whereof also are intended; for it is not the grace of repentance and faith, but the doctrine concerning them, which the apostle hath respect to. There is, therefore, some peculiar reason why "doctrine" should be thus peculiarly prefixed unto "baptisms and the laying on of hands," and not to the other things mentioned; for that "imposition of hands" is placed in the same order with "baptisms," the conjunctive particle doth manifest, ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν. The following instances are plain, only some would reduce them unto one principle,—namely, the resurrection of all unto judgment.

There is, therefore, in these words nothing peculiar nor difficult, but only what concerns "baptisms," and "the imposition of hands," the "doctrine" whereof is specified. Now, I cannot discover any just reason hereof, unless it be, that by "baptisms," and "the imposition of hands," the apostle intendeth none of those rudiments of Christian religion wherein men were to be first instructed, but those rites whereof they were made partakers who were so instructed. As if the apostle had said, 'These principles of the doctrine of Christ,—namely, repentance, faith, the resurrection, and judgment, are those doctrines wherein they are to be instructed who are to be baptized, and to have hands laid on them.' According to this sense, the words are to be read as in a parenthesis: "Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, (namely, the doctrine of baptisms, and of the imposition of hands,) of the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment." When men began to attend unto the gospel, and thereon to give up their names to the church, there were certain doctrines that they were thoroughly to be instructed in, before they were admitted unto baptism; see Gal. 6:6. These being the catechetical rudiments of Christian religion, are called here διδαχὴ βαπτισμῶν ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν, or the doctrines that were to be taught in order unto the administration of those rites.

Taking this for the design of the apostle in the words, as is most probable, there are four instances given of those principal rudiments of Christian religion, wherein all men were to be instructed before they were admitted unto baptism, who came thereunto in their own personal right, having not been

made partakers thereof by their covenant right, through the profession of their parents, in their infancy. In these were persons to be fully instructed before their solemn initiation; the doctrine concerning them being thence called the "doctrine of baptisms, and of the imposition of hands," because previously necessary unto the administration of these rites. There is a difficulty, I confess, that this exposition is pressed with, from the use of the word in the plural number, βαπτισμῶν, "of baptisms;" but this equally concerns all other expositions, and shall be spoken unto in its proper place. And this I take to be the sense of the words which the design of the place and manner of expression lead us unto. But yet, because sundry learned men are otherwise minded, I shall so explain the words as that their meaning may be apprehended, supposing distinct heads of doctrine to be contained in them.

Μετανοίας. Our next work is to consider the particular instances in their order. And the first is, μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων "repentance from dead works." This was taught in the first place unto all those who would give up themselves to the discipline of Christ and the gospel. And in the teaching hereof, both the nature and necessity of the duty were regarded. And in the nature of it two things were declared, and are to be considered: 1. What are "dead works;" and, 2. What is "repentance from them."

Νεκρῶν ἔργων. 1. This expression of "dead works" is peculiar unto our apostle, and unto this epistle. It is nowhere used but in this place and chap. 9:14. And he useth it in answer unto what he elsewhere declares concerning men's being dead in sin by nature, Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13. That which he there ascribes unto their persons, here he attributeth unto their works. These Peter calls men's "old sins," namely, which they lived in before their conversion: 2 Epist. 1:9, Λήθην λαβὼν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν,—"Forgetting that he was purged from his old sins." He hath respect unto what is here intended. They were, before their initiation, instructed in the necessity of forsaking the sins wherein they lived before their conversion, which he calls their "old" or "former sins;" which he hath also respect unto, 1 Epist. 4:3, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." The necessity of repentance from these and the like sins was taught them, and which they made profession of, before they were admitted unto baptism, wherein they received a token of their being purged from them. And a relapse into those sins which men had openly professed their repentance and relinquishment of, was ever esteemed dangerous, and by some absolutely

pernicious; whereon great contests in the church did ensue. For the controversy was not, whether men falling into any sin, yea, any open or known sin, after baptism, might repent,—which none was ever so foolishly proud as to deny,—but the question was about men's open falling again into those sins, suppose idolatry, which they had made a public profession of their repentance from before their baptism. And it came at last to this, not whether such men might savingly repent, obtain pardon of their sins, and be saved; but whether the church had power to admit them a second time to a public profession of their repentance of those sins, and so take them again into full communion. For some pleaded, that the profession of repentance for those sins, and the renunciation of them, being indispensably necessary antecedently unto baptism in them that were adult,—the obligation not to live in them at all being on them who were baptized in their infancy,—baptism alone was the only pledge the church could give of the remission of such sins; and therefore, where men fell again into those sins, seeing baptism was not to be repeated, they were to be left unto the mercy of God,—the church could receive them no more. But whereas the numbers were very great of those who in time of persecution fell back into idolatry, who yet afterwards returned and professed their repentance, the major part, who always are for the many, agreed that they were to be received, and reflected with no small severity on those that were otherwise minded. But whereas both parties in this difference ran into extremes, the event was pernicious on both sides,—the one in the issue losing the truth and peace, the other the purity of the church.

The sins of unregenerate persons, whereof repentance was to be expressed before baptism, are called "dead works," in respect of their nature and their end. For, (1.) As to their nature, they proceed from a principle under the power of spiritual death; they are the works of persons "dead in trespasses and sins." All the moral actings of such persons, with respect unto a supernatural end, are dead works, being not enlivened by a vital principle of spiritual life. And it is necessary that a person be spiritually living before his works will be so. Our walking in holy obedience is called "the life of God," Eph. 4:18; that is, the life which God requires, which by his especial grace he worketh in us, whose acts have him for their object and their end. Where this life is not, persons are dead; and so are their works, even all that they do with respect unto the living God. And they are called so, (2.) With respect unto their end; they are "mortua," because "mortifera,"—"dead, because deadly;" they procure death, and end in death. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," James 1:15. They proceed

from death spiritual, and end in death eternal. On the same account are they called "unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. 5:11. They proceed from a principle of spiritual darkness, and end in darkness everlasting. We may, therefore, know what was taught them concerning these dead works, namely, their nature and their merit. And this includes the whole doctrine of the law, with conviction of sin thereby. They were taught that they were sinners by nature, "dead in sins," and thence "children of wrath," Eph. 2:1–3; that in that estate the law of God condemned both them and their works, denouncing death and eternal destruction against them. And in this sense, with respect unto the law of God, these dead works do comprise their whole course in this world, as they did their best as well as their worst. But yet there is no doubt an especial respect unto those great outward enormities which they lived in during their Judaism, even after the manner of the Gentiles. For such the apostle Peter, writing unto these Hebrews, describes their conversation to have been, 1 Pet. 4:3, as we showed before. And from thence he describes what a blessed deliverance they had by the gospel, 1 Pet. 1:18–21. And when he declares the apostasy of some to their former courses, he shows it to be like the returning of a dog to his vomit, after they had escaped them that live in error, and the pollutions that are in the world through lust, 2 Pet. 2:18–22.

These were the works which converts were taught to abandon, and a profession of repentance for them was required of all before their initiation into Christian religion, or before they were received into the church. For it was not then as now, that any one might be admitted into the society of the faithful, and yet continue to live in open sins unrepented of.

Μετάνοια. 2. That which is required, and which they were taught, with respect unto these dead works, is μετάνοια, "repentance." "Repentance from dead works" is the first thing required of them who take upon them the profession of the gospel, and consequently the first principle of the doctrine of Christ, as it is here placed by the apostle. Without this, whatever is attempted or attained therein is only a dishonour to Christ and a disappointment unto men. This is the method of preaching, confirmed by the example and command of Christ himself: "Repent, and believe the gospel," Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15. And almost all the sermons that we find, not only of John the Baptist in a way of preparation for the declaration of the gospel, as Matt. 3:2, but of the apostles also, in pressing the actual reception of it on the Jews and Gentiles, have this as their first principle, namely, the necessity of repentance, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 14:15. Thence, in the preaching of the gospel it is said, that "God commandeth all men

everywhere to repent," Acts 17:30. And when the Gentiles had received the gospel, the church at Jerusalem glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts 11:18. Again, this is expressed as the first issue of grace and mercy from God towards men by Jesus Christ, which is therefore first to be proposed unto them: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel," Acts 5:31. And because it is the first, it is put synecdochically for the whole work of God's grace by Christ: "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts 3:26. It is therefore evident, that this was the first doctrinal principle, as to their own duty, which was pressed on and fixed in the minds of men on their first instruction in the gospel.

And in the testimonies produced, both the causes of it and its general nature are expressed. For, (1.) Its supreme original cause is the good-will, grace, and bounty of God. He grants and gives it to whom he pleaseth, of his own good pleasure, Acts 11:18. (2.) It is immediately collated on the souls of men by Jesus Christ, as a fruit of his death, and an effect of that "all power in heaven and in earth" which was bestowed on him by the Father. "He giveth repentance unto Israel," Acts 5:31. The sovereign disposal of it is from the will of the Father; and the actual collation of it is an effect of the grace of the Son. And, (3.) The nature of it is expressed in the conversion of the Gentiles: it is "unto life," Acts 11:18. The repentance required of men in the first preaching of the gospel, and the necessity whereof was pressed on them, was "unto life;" that is, such as had saving conversion unto God accompanying of it. This kind of repentance is required unto our initiation in the gospel-state. Not an empty profession of any kind of repentance, but real conversion unto God, is required of such persons.

But, moreover, we must consider this μετάνοια, or "repentance," in its own nature, at least in general, that we may the better understand this first principle of catechetical doctrine. In this sense it respects,—(1.) The mind and judgment; (2.) The will and affections; and, (3.) The life or conversation of men.

(1.) It respects the mind and judgment, according to the notation of the word, which signifies a change of mind, or an after-consideration and judgment. Men, whilst they live in dead works, under the power of sin, do never make a right judgment concerning either their nature, their guilt, or their end. Hence are they so often called to remember and consider things aright, to deal about them with the reason of men; and for want thereof are said to be foolish, brutish, sottish, and to have no understanding. The mind is practically deceived about them. There are degrees in this deceit, but all sinners are actually more or

less deceived. No men, whilst the natural principle of conscience remains in them, can cast off all the convictions of sin, Rom. 2:14, 15; and that it is "the judgment of God that those who commit such things are worthy of death," Rom. 1:32. But yet some there are who so far despise these convictions as to give up themselves unto all sin with delight and greediness. See Eph. 4:17–19. Practically they call good evil, and evil good; and do judge either that there is not that evil in sin which is pretended, or, however, that it is better to enjoy "the pleasures of it for a season," than to relinquish or forego it on other considerations. Others there are who have some further sense of those dead works. In particular they judge them evil, but they are so entangled in them as that they see not the greatness of that evil, nor do make such a judgment concerning it as whereon a relinquishment of them should necessarily ensue. Unto these two heads, in various degrees, may all impenitent sinners be reduced. They are such as, despising their convictions, go on in an unbridled course of licentiousness, as not judging the voice, language, and mind of them worth inquiring into. Others do in some measure attend unto them, but yet practically they refuse them, and embrace motives unto sin, turning the scale on that side as occasion, opportunities, and temptations do occur. Wherefore, the first thing in this repentance is a thorough change of the mind and judgment concerning these dead works. The mind, by the light and conviction of saving truth, determines clearly and steadily concerning the true nature of sin, and its demerit, that it is an evil thing and bitter to have forsaken God thereby. Casting out all prejudices, laying aside all pleas, excuses, and palliations, it finally concludes sin,—that is, all and every sin, every thing that hath the nature of sin,—to be universally evil; evil in itself, evil to the sinner, evil in its present effects and future consequents, evil in every kind, shamefully evil, incomparably evil, yea, the only evil, or all that is evil in the world. And this judgment it makes with respect unto the nature and law of God, to its own primitive and present depraved condition, unto present duty and future judgment. This is the first thing required unto repentance, and where this is not, there is nothing of it.

(2.) It respects the will and affections. It is our turning unto God; our turning from him being in the bent and inclination of our wills and affections unto sin. The change of the will, or the taking away of the will of sinning, is the principal part of repentance. It is with respect unto our wills that we are said to be "dead in sin," and "alienated from the life of God." And by this change of the will do we become "dead to sin," Rom. 6:2; that is, whatever remainder of lust

and corruption there may be in us, yet the will of sinning is taken away. And for the affections, it works that change in the soul, as that quite contrary affections shall be substituted and set at work with respect unto the same object. There are "pleasures" in sin, and also it hath its "wages." With respect unto these, those that live in dead works both delight in sin, and have complacency in the accomplishment of it. These are the affections which the soul exerciseth about sin committed, or to be committed. Instead of them, repentance, by which they are utterly banished, sets at work sorrow, grief, abhorrency, self-detestation, revenge, and the like afflictive passions of the mind. Nothing stirs but they affect the soul with respect unto sin.

(3.) It respects the course of life or conversation. It is a repentance from dead works; that is, in the relinquishment of them. Without this no profession of repentance is of any worth or use. To profess a repentance of sin, and to live in sin, is to mock God, deride his law, and deceive our own souls. This is that change which alone doth or can evidence the other internal changes of the mind, will, and affections, to be real and sincere, Prov. 28:13. Whatever without this is pretended, is false and hypocritical; like the repentance of Judah, "not with the whole heart, but feignedly," Jer. 3:10,—בְּשֶׁקֶר. There was a lie in it; for their works answered not their words. Neither is there any mention of repentance in the Scripture wherein this change, in an actual relinquishment of dead works, is not expressly required. And hereunto three things are necessary: —

[1.] A full purpose of heart for the relinquishment of every sin. This is "cleaving unto the Lord with purpose of heart," Acts 11:23; Ps. 17:3. To manifest the stability and steadfastness which is required herein, David confirmed it with an oath, Ps. 119:106. Every thing that will either live or thrive must have a root, on which it grows and whence it springs. Other things may occasionally bud and put forth, but they wither immediately. And such is a relinquishment of sin from occasional resolutions. Upon some smart of conviction, from danger, sickness, trouble, fear, affliction, there blooms in the minds of many a sudden resolution to forsake sin; and as suddenly for the most part it fades again. True repentance forms a steady and unshaken resolution in the heart, which respects the forsaking of all sin, and at all times and occasions.

[2.] Constant endeavours to actuate and fulfil this purpose. And these endeavours respect all the means, causes, occasions, temptations, leading unto sin, that they may be avoided, opposed, and deliverance obtained from them; as also all means, advantages, and furtherance of those graces and duties which are

opposed to these dead works, that they may be improved. A heartless, inactive purpose, is that which many take up withal, and ruin their souls by. Where, therefore, there is not a sedulous endeavour, by watchfulness and diligence, in the constant use of all means to avoid all dead works, in all their concerns, from their first rise and principle to their finishing or consummation, there is no true repentance from them.

[3.] An actual relinquishment of all sins in the course of our walking before God. And hereunto is required, 1st. Not an absolute freedom from all sin; for there is no man living who doeth good, and sinneth not. 2dly. No absolute and precise deliverance even from great sins, whereinto the soul may be surprised by the power of temptations. Examples to the contrary abound in the Scripture. But yet such sins, when any one is overtaken with them, ought, (1st.) To put the sinner upon a severe inquiry whether his repentance were sincere and saving; for where it is, usually the soul is preserved from such falls, 2 Pet. 1:10. And, (2dly.) Put him upon the renewing his repentance, with the same care, diligence, sorrow, and humiliation, as at the first. But, 1st. It is required that this property of repentance be prevalent against the common sins of the world, men's "old sins," which they lived in before their conversion. Those sins which are expressly declared in the gospel to be inconsistent with the profession, ends, and glory of it, it wholly excludes, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 2 Cor. 7:10; 1 John 3:14, 15. And, 2dly. Against a course in any sin or sins, either spiritual or fleshly, internal or external, 1 John 3:9; Rom. 6:2. 3dly. For the most part, against all outward sins in the course of our conversation in the world; in which things our sincerity or perfection is exercised. And these things were necessary to be touched on, to manifest the nature of this first principle wherein men are to be instructed.

Obs. I. There is no interest in Christ or Christian religion to be obtained without "repentance from dead works;" nor any orderly entrance into a gospel church-state without a credible profession thereof.

This was one of the first things that were preached unto sinners, as was before declared; and without a compliance herewith they were not further to be treated with. For,—1. The Lord Christ came not only to save men from their sins, but to turn them from their sins,—to turn them from their sins, that they may be saved from them. When he comes out of Sion as a Redeemer, a Deliverer, a Saviour, he "turns away ungodliness from Jacob;" that is, he turns Jacob from ungodliness, Rom. 11:26,—namely, by repentance. This was one principal end of the birth, life, death, and exaltation of Christ. His work in all these was to make peace and reconciliation between God and man. Hereunto

belongeth the slaying, destruction, or removal of the enmity that was between them. This, with respect unto God, was done by the atonement he made, the sacrifice he offered, and the price of redemption that he paid, 2 Cor. 5:21. But the whole work is not hereby completed. The enmity on our part also must be taken away, or reconciliation will not be finished. Now, we were "enemies in our mind by wicked works," Col. 1:21; and thereby "alienated from the life of God," Eph. 4:18. The removal hereof consists in this repentance; for that is our turning unto God upon the terms of peace tendered unto us. They, therefore, do but deceive their own souls who trust unto peace with God on the mediation of Christ, but are not at peace with God in their own souls by repentance; for the one is not without the other. As he who is at peace with God on his own part by repentance, shall never fail of peace from God by the atonement,—for he that so lays hold on his arm and strength, that he may have peace, shall be sure to obtain it, Isa. 27:5,—so without this, whatever notions men may have of reconciliation with God, they will find him in the issue as "devouring fire," or "everlasting burnings." All doctrines, notions, or persuasions that tend to alleviate the necessity of that personal repentance which was before described, or would substitute any outward penance, or corporeal, pecuniary, penal satisfaction in the room thereof, are pernicious to the souls of men. And there is nothing so much to be dreaded or abhorred as a pretence taken unto sin, unto any sin without repentance, from the grace or doctrine of the gospel. "Shall we continue in sin," saith our apostle, "that grace may abound? God forbid." Those who do so, and thereby "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," are among the number of them "whose damnation sleepeth not."

2. That any person living in sin without repentance, should have an interest in Christ or Christian religion, is inconsistent with the glory of God and the honour of Jesus Christ, and would render the gospel, if taught therein, a doctrine fit to be rejected by all men. For where is the glory of the righteousness or holiness of God, if impenitent sinners may be accepted with him? Besides that it is contrary unto the whole declaration of himself, that he "will not acquit the guilty," that he will not justify the wicked, nor accept the ungodly, it hath an absolute inconsistency with the especial righteousness of his nature, and which he exerciseth as the supreme rector and judge of all, that any such persons should approach before him, or stand in his sight, Ps. 5:4–6; Rom. 1:32. And for the Lord Jesus Christ, it would plainly make him the "minister of sin;"—the thought whereof our apostle so detests, Gal. 2:17. Nay, a supposition hereof would make the coming of Christ to be the greatest means of letting in and

increasing sin on the world, that ever was since the fall of Adam. And the gospel must then be looked on as a doctrine meet to be abandoned by all wise and sober persons, as that which would tend unavoidably to the debauching of mankind and the ruin of human society. For whereas it doth openly and avowedly propose and declare the pardon and remission of sin, of all sorts of sin, to all sorts of persons that shall believe and obey it; if it did this without annexing unto its promise the condition of repentance, never was there, nor can there be, so great an encouragement unto all sorts of sin and wickedness. There is much to that purpose in the doctrines of purgatory, penances, and satisfactions; whereby men are taught that they may come off from their sins at a cheaper rate than eternal ruin, without that repentance which is necessary. But this is nothing in comparison to the mischief which the gospel would produce, if it did not require "repentance from dead works." For besides those innumerable advantages that otherwise it hath to evidence itself to be from God, whereas these other pretences are such as wise and considering men may easily look through their daubing, and see their ground of falsehood, the gospel doth certainly propose its pardon freely, "without money, and without price;" and so, on this supposition, would lay the reins absolutely free on the neck of sin and wickedness: whereas those other fancies are burdened and charged with such inconveniencies as may lay some curb upon them in easy and carnal minds. Wherefore, I say, on such a false and cursed supposition, it would be the interest of wise and sober men to oppose and reject the gospel, as the most effectual means of overflowing the world with sin and ungodliness. But it doth not more fully condemn idolatry, or that the devil is to be worshipped, than it doth any such notion or apprehension. It cannot be denied but that some men may, and it is justly to be feared that some men do, abuse the doctrine of the gospel to countenance themselves in a vain expectation of mercy and pardon, whilst they willingly live in a course of sin. But as this, in their management, is the principal means of their ruin, so, in the righteous judgment of God, it will be the greatest aggravation of their condemnation. And whereas some have charged the preachers of gospel grace as those who thereby give countenance unto this presumption, it is an accusation that hath more of the hatred of grace in it than of the love of holiness. For none do nor can press the relinquishment of sin and repentance of it upon such assured grounds, and with such cogent arguments, as those by whom the grace of Jesus Christ in the gospel is fully opened and declared.

From what hath been discoursed, we may inquire after our own interest in this great and necessary duty; to assist us wherein I shall yet add some further directions; as,—

Repentance is twofold: first, Initial; secondly, Continued in our whole course; and our inquiry is to be after our interest in both of them. The former is that whose general nature we have before described, which is the door of entrance into a gospel-state, or a condition of acceptance with God in and through Christ. And concerning it we may observe sundry things:—

1. That as to the properties of it, it is,—

(1.) Solemn; a duty that in all its circumstances is to be fixed and stated. It is not to be mixed only with other duties, but we are to set ourselves on purpose and engage ourselves singularly unto it. I will not say this is so essential unto it, that he can in no sense be said sincerely to have repented who hath not separately and distinctly been exercised herein for some season; yet I will say, that the repentance of such a one will scarce be ever well cleared up unto his own soul. When the Spirit of grace is poured out on men, they shall "mourn apart," Zech. 12:12–14; that is, they shall peculiarly and solemnly separate themselves to the right discharge of this duty between God and their souls. And those who have hitherto neglected it, or failed herein, may be advised solemnly to address themselves unto it, whatever hopes they may have that they have been carried through it already. There is no loss of time, grace, nor comfort, in the solemn renovation of initial repentance.

(2.) Universal, as to the object of it. It respects all sin and every sin, every crooked path, and every step therein. It absolutely excludes all reserves for any sin. To profess repentance, and yet with an express reserve for any sin, approacheth very near the great sin of lying to the Holy Ghost. It is like Ananias his keeping back part of the price when the whole was devoted. And these soul-destroying reserves, which absolutely overthrow the whole nature of repentance, commonly arise from one of these pretences or occasions:—

[1.] That the sin reserved is small, and of no great importance. It is a little one. But true repentance respects the nature of sin, which is in every sin equally, the least as well as the greatest. The least reserve for vanity, pride, conformity to the world, inordinate desires or affections, utterly overthrows the truth of repentance, and all the benefits of it.

[2.] That it is so useful as that, at least at present, it cannot be parted withal. So Naaman would reserve his bowing before the king in the house of Rimmon, because his honours and preferments depended thereon. So it is with many in their course of life or trading in the world; some advantages by crooked ways seem as useful to them as their right hand, which they cannot as yet cut off and cast from them. This, therefore, they have a secret reserve for; though it may not be express, yet it is real and effectual. But he who in this case will not part with a right eye, or a right hand, must be content to go with them both into hell-fire.

[3.] Secrecy. That which is hidden from every eye may be left behind. Some sweet morsel of this kind may yet be rolled under the tongue. But this is an evidence of the grossest hypocrisy, and the highest contempt of God, who seeth in secret.

[4.] Uncertainty of some things whether they are sins or no. It may be some think such neglects of duty, such compliances with the world, are not sins; and whereas themselves have not so full a conviction of their being sinful as they have of other sins which are notorious and against the light of nature, only they have just reason to fear they are evil,—this they will break through, and indulge themselves in them. But this also impeacheth the truth of repentance. Where it is sincere, it engageth the soul against "all appearance of evil." And one that is truly humbled hath no more certain rule in his walking, than not to do what he hath just cause to doubt whether it be lawful or no.

True repentance, therefore, is universal, and inconsistent with all these reserves.

2. Unto the same end, that we may be acquainted with our own interest in this initiating repentance, we must consider the season when it is wrought. And this is,—

(1.) Upon the first communication of gospel light unto us by the Holy Ghost. Christ sends him to "convince us of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8. And if upon the first participation of light and conviction by the Holy Ghost, this repentance is not wrought in us, it is to be feared that we have missed our season. And so it falls out with many. They receive light and convictions, but use them unto other ends. They put them, it may be, upon a profession, and a relinquishment of some ways and parties of men, but further

they use them not. Their first proper end is to work our own souls unto saving repentance; and if we miss their first impressions, their power and efficacy for that end is hardly recoverable.

(2.) It never fails on the first saving view of Jesus Christ as crucified, Zech. 12:10. It is impossible that any one should have a saving view of Christ crucified, and not be savingly humbled for sin. And there is no one single trial of our faith in Christ whether it be genuine or no, that is more natural than this: What have been the effects of it as to humiliation and repentance? Where these ensue not upon what we account our believing, there we have not had a saving view of Christ crucified.

3. Whereas we call this repentance initial, we must consider that it differs not in nature and kind from that which we ought to be exercised in whilst we are in this world; whereof afterwards. That which we intend thereby, is the use of repentance in our first admission into an interest in a gospel-state. And with respect hereunto its duration may be considered; concerning which we may observe,—

(1.) That with some, especially in extraordinary cases, this work and duty may be over in a day, as to its initiating use and efficacy. So was it with many primitive converts, who at the same time were savingly humbled and comforted by the promises of the gospel, Acts 2:37–42, 16:31–34. Now, although in such persons the things we have ascribed unto this repentance are not wrought formally and distinctly, yet are they all wrought virtually and radically, and do act themselves on all future occasions.

(2.) Some are held longer unto this duty as it is initiating. Not only did Paul continue three days and nights under his sore distress without relief, but others are kept days, and weeks, and months ofttimes, in the discharge of this duty, before they have a refreshing entrance given them thereby into an estate of spiritual rest in the gospel. There is, therefore, no measure of time to be allotted unto the solemn attendance unto this duty, but only this, that none faint under it, wax weary of it, or give it over, before there be thereby administered unto them an entrance into the kingdom of God.

And these considerations of the nature of repentance from dead works as it is initiating, may give us some direction in that necessary inquiry concerning our own personal interest in it.

Now there are several ways whereby men miss their duty with respect unto this first principle, and thereby ruin their souls eternally:—

1 Some utterly despise it. Such are the presumptuous sinners mentioned, Deut. 29:19, 20. As they disregard the curse of the law, so they do also the promise of the gospel, as unto any repentance or relinquishment of sin with respect unto them. Such folly and brutish foolishness possesseth the minds of multitudes, that they will have some expectation of benefit by the gospel, and will give it an outward compliance, but will not touch on the very first thing which it indispensably requireth of all that intend any concernment in it. It were easy to open and aggravate this deplorable fully; but I must not stay on these things.

2. Some will repent in their dead works, but not from them. That is, upon convictions, afflictions, dangers, they will be troubled for their sins, make confession of them, be grieved that they have contracted such guilt and dangers, with resolutions to forego them; but yet they will abide in their sins and dead works still. So Pharaoh more than once repented him in his sins, but never had repentance from them. And so it was expressly with the Israelites themselves, Ps. 78:34–37. And this kind of repentance ruins not fewer souls than the former total contempt of it. There are not a few unto whom this kind of repentance stands in the same stead all their days, as confession and absolution do to the Papists; it gives them present ease, that they may return to their former sins.

3. Some repent from dead works in some sense, but they repent not of them. They will come, through the power of their convictions, to a relinquishment of many of their old sins, as Herod did upon the preaching of John Baptist, but are never truly and savingly humbled for sin absolutely. Their lives are changed, but their hearts are not renewed. And their renunciation of sin is always partial; whereof before. There are many other ways whereby men deceive their souls in this matter, which I must not now insist upon.

Secondly, This repentance, in the nature and kind of it, is a duty to be continued in the whole course of our lives. It ceaseth as unto those especial acts which belong unto our initiation into a gospel-state, but it abides as to our orderly preservation therein. There must be no end of repentance until there is a full end of sin. All tears will not be wiped from our eyes until all sin is perfectly removed from our souls. Now repentance, in this sense, may be considered two ways:—1. As it is a stated, constant duty of the gospel; 2. As it is occasional:—

1. As it is stated, it is our humble, mournful walking with God, under a sense of sin, continually manifesting itself in our natures and infirmities. And the acts of this repentance in us are of two sorts:—(1.) Direct and immediate; (2.) Consequential and dependent. The former may be referred unto two heads:—[1.] Confession; [2.] Humiliation. These a truly penitent soul will be continually exercised in. He whose heart is so lifted up, on any pretence, as not to abide in the constant exercise of these acts of repentance, is one whom the soul of God hath no delight in. The other, which are immediate acts of faith, but inseparable from these, are, [1.] Supplications for the pardon of sin; [2.] Diligent watchfulness against sin. It is evident how great a share of our walking with God consists in these things, which yet I must not enlarge upon.

2. This continued repentance is occasional, when it is heightened unto a singular solemnity. And these occasions may be referred unto three heads:—

(1.) A personal surprisal into any great actual sin. Such an occasion is not to be passed over with the ordinary actings of repentance. David, upon his fall, brings his renewed repentance into that solemnity, as if it had been his first conversion to God. On that account he deduceth his personal sins from the sin of his nature, Ps. 51:5, besides many other circumstances whereby he gave it an extraordinary solemnity. So Peter, upon the denial of his Master, "wept bitterly;" which, with his following humiliation and the renovation of his faith, our Saviour calls his conversion, Luke 22:32,—a new conversion of him who was before really converted. There is nothing more dangerous unto our spiritual state, than to pass by particular instances of sin with the general duties of repentance.

(2.) The sin or sins of the family or church whereunto we are related, calls unto us to give a solemnity unto this duty, 2 Cor. 7:11. The church having failed in the business of the incestuous offender, when they were convinced by the apostle of their sinful miscarriage therein, most solemnly renewed their repentance towards God.

(3.) Afflictions and sore trials call for this duty, as we may see in the issue of all things between God and Job, chap. 42:6.

And lastly, we may observe, that this repentance is a grace of the Spirit of Christ, a gospel grace; and therefore, whatever unpleasantness there may be in its exercise unto the flesh, it is sweet, refreshing, satisfactory, and secretly pleasant, unto the inner man. Let us not be deterred from abiding and abounding in this duty. It is not a morose, tetrical, severe self-maceration, but a

humble, gracious, mournful walking with God, wherein the soul finds rest, sweetness, joy, and peace, being rendered thereby compliant with the will of God, and benign, useful, kind, compassionate, towards men, as might be declared.

The necessity of a profession of this repentance from dead works in order unto an admission into the society of the church, that an evidence be given of the power and efficacy of the doctrine of Christ in the souls of men, that his disciples may be visibly separated by their own profession from the world that lies in evil, and be fitted for communion among themselves in love, hath been elsewhere spoken unto.

Πίστιως ἐπὶ Θεόν. The second instance of the doctrinal foundation supposed to be laid among the Hebrews, is "of faith towards God." Καί. And this principle, with that foregoing, are coupled together by the conjunctive particle καί,—"of repentance and of faith." Neither ought they to be, nor can they be severed. Where the one is, there is the other; and where either is not, there is neither, whatever be pretended. He repenteth not who hath not faith towards God; and he hath no faith towards God who repenteth not. And in this expression, where repentance is first placed, and faith in God afterwards, only the distinction that is between them, but neither an order of nature in the things themselves, nor a necessary order in the teaching of them, is intended. For in order of nature "faith towards God" must precede "repentance from dead works." No man can use any argument to prevail with others unto repentance, but it must be taken from the word of the law or the gospel, the precepts, promises, and threatenings of them. If there be no faith towards God with respect unto these things, whence should repentance from dead works arise, or how can the necessity of it be demonstrated? Besides, that the order of nature among the things themselves is not here intended is evident from hence, in that the very last principles mentioned, concerning "the resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment," are the principal motives and arguments unto the very first of them, or the necessity of repentance, as our apostle declares fully, Acts 17:30, 31. But there is some kind of order between these things with respect unto profession intended. For no man can or ought to be esteemed to make a due profession of faith towards God, who does not first declare his repentance from dead works. Nor can any other have the comfort of faith in God, but such as have in themselves some evidence of the sincerity of their repentance.

Wherefore, omitting any further consideration of the order of these things, we must inquire what is here intended by "faith in God." Now this cannot be faith in the most general notion of it; because it is reckoned as a principle of the doctrine of Christ, but faith in God absolutely taken is a duty of the law of nature. Upon an acknowledgment of the being of God, it is thereby required that we believe in him as the first eternal truth; that we submit unto him and trust in him, as the sovereign Lord, the judge and rewarder of all. And a defect herein was the beginning of Adam's transgression. Wherefore faith in this sense cannot be called a principle of the doctrine of Christ, which wholly consists in supernatural revelations. Nor can it be so termed with respect unto the Jews in particular. For in their Judaism they were sufficiently taught faith in God, and needed not to have been instructed therein as a part of the doctrine of Christ. And there is a distinction put by our Saviour himself between that faith in God which they had, and the peculiar faith in himself which he required: John 14:1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Besides, where these two, repentance and faith, are elsewhere joined together, as they are frequently, it is an especial sort of faith in God that is intended. See Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 19:4, 20:21.

It is therefore faith in God as accomplishing the promise unto Abraham in sending Jesus Christ, and granting pardon or remission of sins by him, that is intended. The whole is expressed by, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," Mark 1:15; that is, the tidings of the accomplishment of the promise made to the fathers for the deliverance of us from all our sins by Jesus Christ. This is that which was pressed on the Hebrews by Peter in his first sermon unto them, Acts 2:38, 39, 3:25, 26. Hence these two principles are expressed, by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 20:21. As repentance is here described by the "terminus a quo,"—it is "repentance from dead works;" so there it is described by its "terminus ad quem,"—it is "repentance toward God," in our turning unto him. For those who live in their lusts and sins, do it not only against the command of God, but also they place them, as to their affections and expectation of satisfaction, in the stead of God. And this faith in God is there called, by way of explication, "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, as him in whose giving and sending the truth of God was fulfilled, and by whom we believe in God, 1 Pet. 1:21. This, therefore, is the faith in God here intended; namely, that whereby we believe the accomplishment of his promise, in sending his Son Jesus Christ to die for us, and to save us from our sins. And this the Lord Christ testified unto in his own personal ministry. Hence our apostle says, that "he was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God,

to confirm the promises made unto the fathers," Rom. 15:8. And this he testified unto them, John 8:24, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins:" and that because they rejected the promise of God made unto the fathers concerning him, which was the only foundation of salvation. And this was the first thing that ordinarily our apostle preached in his dispensation of the gospel: 1 Cor. 15:3, "For I delivered unto you first of all, ... how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." He taught the thing itself, and the relation it had unto the promise of God recorded in the Scripture. That this is the faith in God here intended, I prove by these reasons:—1. Because this indeed was that faith in particular which, in the first preaching of the gospel unto these Hebrews, they were taught and instructed in. And therefore with respect unto it our apostle says, that he would not lay again the foundation. The first calling of the church among them was by the sermons of Peter and the rest of the apostles, Acts 2–4. Now consult those sermons, and you shall find the principal thing insisted on in them was the accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham and David, which they exhorted them to believe. This, therefore, was that faith in God which was first taught them, and which our apostle hath respect unto. 2. Because it was the want of this faith which proved the ruin of that church. As in the wilderness, the unbelief which they perished for respected the faithfulness of God in the accomplishment of his promise with respect to the land Canaan; so the unbelief which the body of the people now perished for, dying in their sins and for them, respected the accomplishment of the great promise of sending Jesus Christ: which things the apostle compares at large, chap. 3. This, then, was that which he here minds the Hebrews of, as the principal foundation of that profession of the gospel which they had taken on them. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. II. Faith in God as to the accomplishing of the great promise, in sending his Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, is the great fundamental principle of our interest in and profession of the gospel.

Faith in God under this formal consideration, not only that he hath sent and given Jesus Christ his Son, but that he did it in the accomplishment of his promise, is required of us. For whereas he hath chosen to glorify all the properties of his nature in the person and mediation of Christ, he doth not only declare his grace in giving him, but also his truth in sending him according unto his word. And this was that which holy persons of old did glorify God in an especial manner upon the account of, Luke 1:54, 55, 68–75. And there is

nothing in the gospel that God himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy apostles, do more insist upon than this, that God hath fulfilled his promise in sending his Son into the world. On this one thing depend all religion, the truth of the Bible, and all our salvation. If it be not evident that God hath accomplished his promise, the whole Bible may pass for a fable; for it is all built on this supposition, that God gave and hath accomplished it; the first being the foundation of the Old Testament, and the latter of the New. And there are sundry things that signalize our faith in God with respect hereunto; as,—

1. This promise of sending Jesus Christ was the first express engagement that God ever made of his faithfulness and veracity unto any creatures. He is essentially faithful and true; but he had not engaged himself to act according unto those properties, in his dealing with us in a way of love and grace, calling for trust and confidence in us, before he gave the promise concerning Christ, Gen. 3:15. This, therefore, was the spring and measure of all other subsequent promises. They are all of them but new assurances thereof; and according as it fares with that, so it must do with all the rest. God gave out this promise as that whereon he would depend the honour and glory of his fidelity in all other promises that he should make. As we find him true or failing herein, so he expects our faith and trust in all his other promises should be. Hence this was the first and immediate object of faith in man after the fall.

The first thing proposed unto him, was to believe in God with respect unto his faithfulness in the future accomplishment of this promise; and faith concerning its actual accomplishment is the first thing required of us.

Besides, this promise hung longest on the file before its accomplishment. There was not less than four thousand years between its giving and its performance. And many things happened during that season, whereby both itself, and faith in God thereon, were greatly signalized. For, (1.) More and greater objections against the truth of it, more temptations against it, were raised and managed, than against all other promises whatever. This long suspension of its fulfilling gave such advantages to Satan in his opposition unto it, that he prevailed against every expectation but that of faith tried and more precious than gold. And the saints themselves had a great exercise in the disappointments which many of them fell into as to the time of its accomplishment. It is not unlikely that most of them looked for it in their own days; great, therefore, were the trials of all sorts about it. (2.) It was all that the true church of God had to live upon during that long season, the sole foundation of its faith, obedience, and consolation. It is true, in progress of

time, God added other promises, precepts, and institutions, for the direction and instruction of the church; but they were all built on this one promise, and all resolved into it. This gave life and signification unto them,—therewith were they to stand or fall. (3.) This was that the world broke off from God upon, and by rejecting it, fell into all confusion and misery. The promise being given unto Adam, was indefinitely given to mankind. And it was suited unto the reparation of their lost condition, yea, their investiture into a better state. And this increased the wrath and malice of Satan. He saw that if they applied themselves to the faith hereof, his former success against them was utterly frustrated. Wherefore he again attempts them, to turn them off from the relief provided against the misery he had cast them into. And as to the generality of mankind, he prevailed in his attempt. By a relinquishment of this promise, not believing of it, not retaining it in their minds, they fell into a second apostasy from God. And what disorder, darkness, confusion, yea, what a hell of horror and misery they cast themselves into, is known. And this consideration greatly signalizes faith in God with respect to this promise. (4.) The whole church of the Jews, rejecting the accomplishment of this promise, utterly perished thereon. This was the sin which that church died for; and that, indeed, which is the foundation of the ruin of all unbelievers who perish under the dispensation of the gospel.

It will be said, it may be, that this promise being now actually accomplished, and that taken for granted, we have not the like concern in it as they had who lived before the said accomplishment. But there is a mistake herein. No man believes aright that the Son of God is come in the flesh, but he who believes that he came in the accomplishment of the promise of God, unto the glory of his truth and faithfulness. And it is from hence that we know aright both the occasion, original, cause, and end of his coming; which whoso considereth not, his pretended faith is in vain.

2. This is the greatest promise that God ever gave to the children of men; and therefore faith in him with respect hereunto is both necessary unto us, and greatly tends unto his glory. Indeed all the concernments of God's glory in the church, and our eternal welfare, are wrapped up herein. But I must not enlarge hereon.

Obs. III. Only we must add, that the consideration of the accomplishment of this promise is a great encouragement and supportment unto faith with respect unto all other promises of God.—Never was any kept so long in abeyance, the state of the church and design of God requiring it. None ever had such

opposition made to its accomplishment. Never was any more likely to be defeated by the unbelief of men; all faith in it being at length renounced by Jews and Gentiles,—which, if any thing, or had it been suspended on any condition, might have disappointed its event. And shall we think that God will leave any other of his promises unaccomplished? that he will not in due time engage his omnipotent power and infinite wisdom in the discharge of his truth and faithfulness? Hath he sent his Son after four thousand years' expectation, and will he not in due time destroy antichrist, call again the Jews, set up the kingdom of Christ gloriously in the world, and finally save the souls of all that sincerely believe? This great instance of divine fidelity leaves no room for the objections of unbelief as unto any other promises under the same assurance.

Ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν. The third principle, according to the order and sense of the words laid down before, is the "resurrection of the dead." And this was a fundamental principle of the Judaical church, indeed of all religions properly so called in the world. The twelfth article of the creed of the present Jews is, ימי משיח,—"The days of the Messiah;" that is, the time will come when God will send the Messiah, and restore all things by him. This under the old testament respected that faith in God which we before discoursed concerning. But the present Jews, notwithstanding this profession, have no interest herein. For not to believe the accomplishment of a promise when it is fulfilled, as also sufficiently revealed and testified unto to be fulfilled, is to reject all faith in God concerning that promise. But this they still retain an appearance and profession of. And their thirteenth article is, תחיית מתים, "The revivification" or "resurrection from the dead." And the faith hereof being explained and confirmed in the gospel, as also sealed by the great seal of the resurrection of Christ, it was ever esteemed as a chief principle of Christianity, and that whose admittance is indispensably necessary unto all religion whatever. And I shall first briefly show how it is a fundamental principle of all religion, and then evidence its especial relation unto that taught by Jesus Christ, or declare how it is a fundamental principle of the gospel. And as to the first, it is evident that without its acknowledgment all religion whatever would be abolished; for if it be once supposed or granted that men were made only for a frail mortal life in this world, that they have no other continuance assigned to their being but what is common to them with the beasts that perish, there would be no more religion amongst them than there is among the beasts themselves. For as they would never be able to solve the difficulties of present temporary dispensations of providence, which will not be reduced unto any such known visible rule of

righteousness, abstracting from the completement of them hereafter, as of themselves to give a firm apprehension of a divine, holy, righteous Power in the government of the universe; so, take away all consideration of future rewards and punishments, which are equally asserted in this and the ensuing principle, and the lusts of men would quickly obliterate all those notions of a Deity, as also of good and evil in their practice, which should preserve them from atheism and bestiality. Neither do we ever see any man giving himself up to the unbelief of these things, but that immediately he casts off all consideration of any public or private good, but what is centred in himself and the satisfaction of his lusts.

But it will be asked, whether the belief of the immortality of the soul be not sufficient to secure religion, without the addition of this article of the resurrection? This, indeed, some among the ancient heathens had faint apprehensions of, without any guess at the resurrection of the body. And some of them also who were most steady in that persuasion had some thoughts also of such a restoration of all things as wherein the bodies of men should have their share. But as their thoughts of these things were fluctuating and uncertain, so was all their religion also; and so it must be on this principle. For there can be no reconciliation of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, to be righteously administered, unto a supposition of the separate everlasting subsistence of the soul only; that is, eternal judgment cannot be on satisfactory grounds believed without an antecedent acknowledgment of the resurrection of the dead. For what justice is it, that the whole of blessedness or misery should fall on the soul only, where the body hath had a great share in the procurement of the one or the other? or that whereas both concur unto the doing of good or evil, the soul only should be rewarded or punished; especially considering what influence the body hath into all that is evil, how the satisfaction of the flesh is the great inducement unto sin on the one hand, and what it often undergoeth and suffereth for that which is good on the other? Shall we think that God gave bodies to the holy martyrs only to endure inexpressible tortures and miseries to death for the sake of Christ, and then to perish for ever? And this manifesteth the great degeneracy the Jewish church was now fallen into; for a great number of them were apostatized into the atheism of denying the resurrection of the dead. And so confident were they in their infidelity, as that they would needs argue and dispute with our Saviour about it; by whom they were confounded, but, after the manner of obstinate infidels, not converted, Matt. 22:23, 24, etc. This was the principal heresy of the Sadducees; which drew along with it those

other foolish opinions of denying angels and spirits, or the subsistence of the souls of men in a separate condition, Acts 23:8. For they concluded well enough, that the continuance of the souls of men would answer no design of providence or justice, if their bodies were not raised again. And whereas God had now given the most illustrious testimony unto this truth in the resurrection of Christ himself, the Sadducees became the most inveterate enemies unto him and opposers of him; for they not only acted against him, and those who professed to believe in him, from that infidelity which was common unto them with most of their countrymen, but also because their peculiar heresy was everted and condemned thereby. And it is usual with men of corrupt minds to prefer such peculiar errors above all other concerns of religion whatever, and to have their lusts inflamed by them into the utmost intemperance. They, therefore, were the first stirrers up and fiercest pursuers of the primitive persecutions: Acts 4:1, 2, "The Sadducees came upon the apostles, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." The overthrow of their private heresy was that which enraged them: chap. 5:17, 18, "Then the high priest rose up, and all that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." And an alike rage were the Pharisees put into about their ceremonies, wherein they placed their especial interest and glory. And our apostle did wisely make an advantage of this difference about the resurrection between those two great sects, to divide them in their counsels and actings, who were before agreed on his destruction on the common account of his preaching Jesus Christ, Acts 23:6–9.

This principle, therefore, both upon the account of its importance in itself, as also of the opposition made unto it among the Jews by the Sadducees, the apostles took care to settle and establish in the first place; as those truths are in an especial manner to be confirmed which are at any time peculiarly opposed. And they had reason thus to do, for all they had to preach unto the world turned on this hinge, that Christ was raised from the dead, whereon our resurrection doth unavoidably follow; so that they confessed that without an eviction and acknowledgment hereof all their preaching was in vain, and all their faith who believed therein was so also, 1 Cor. 15:12–14. This, therefore, was always one of the first principles which our apostle insisted on in the preaching of the gospel; a signal instance whereof we have in his discourse at his first coming unto Athens. First, he reproved their sins and idolatries, declaring that God by him called them to repentance from those dead works; then he taught

them faith in that God who so called them by Jesus Christ: confirming the necessity of both by the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead and future judgment, Acts 17:18–31. He seems, therefore, here directly and summarily to lay down those principles in the order in which he constantly preached them in his first declaration of the gospel. And this was necessary to be spoken concerning the nature and necessity of this principle.

Ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, "the resurrection of the dead." It is usually expressed by ἀνάστασις, the "resurrection" only, Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27, 33; John 11:24; Matt. 22:23, 28. For by this single expression the whole was sufficiently known and apprehended. And so we commonly call it "the resurrection," without any addition. Sometimes it is termed ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν, Acts 4:2, the "resurrection from the dead;" that is, from the state of the dead. Our apostle hath a peculiar expression, Heb. 11:35, Ἔλαβον ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν, —"They received their dead from the resurrection;" that is, by virtue thereof, they being raised to life again. And sometimes it is distinguished with respect unto its consequents in different persons, the good and the bad. The resurrection of the former is called ἀνάστασις ζωῆς, John 5:29, the "resurrection of life;" that is, which is unto life eternal,—the means of entrance into it. This is called ἀνάστασις δικαίων, the "resurrection of the just," Luke 14:14. And so תחיית מתים, the "life of the dead," or the "resurrection of the dead," was used to express the whole blessed estate which ensues thereon to believers: "If by any means I might attain εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τῶν νεκρῶν,"—"the resurrection of the dead," Phil. 3:11. This is ἀναβίωσις, "a living again;" as it is said of the Lord Christ distinctly, Ἀνέστη καὶ ἀνέζησεν, Rom. 14:9,—"He rose and lived again," or he arose to life. With respect unto wicked men it is called ἀνάστασις κρίσεως,—the "resurrection of judgment," or unto judgment, John 5:29. Some shall be raised again to have judgment pronounced against them, to be sentenced unto punishment: "Reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished," 2 Pet. 2:9. And both these are put together, Dan. 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

This truth being of so great importance as that nothing in religion can subsist without it, the apostles very diligently confirmed it in the first churches; and for the same cause it was early assaulted by Satan, and denied and opposed by many. And this was done two ways:—1. By an open denial of any such thing: 1 Cor. 15:12, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" They wholly denied it, as a thing improbable and impossible, as is evident from

the whole ensuing disputation of the apostle on that subject. 2. Others there were, who, not daring to oppose themselves directly unto a principle so generally received in the church, would still allow the expression, but put an allegorical exposition upon it, whereby they plainly overthrew the thing intended. They said, "The resurrection is past already," 2 Tim. 2:18. It is generally thought that these men, Hymeneus and Philetus, placed the resurrection in conversion, or reformation of life, as the Marcionites did afterwards. What some imagine about the Gnostics is vain. And that the reviving of a new light in us is the resurrection intended in the Scripture, some begin to mutter among ourselves; but, that as death is a separation or sejunction of the soul and the body, so the resurrection is a reunion of them in and unto life, the Scripture is too express for any one to deny and not virtually to reject it wholly. And it may be observed, that our apostle in both these cases doth not only condemn these errors as false, but declares positively that their admission overthrows the faith, and renders the preaching of the gospel vain and useless.

Now this resurrection of the dead is the restoration, by the power of God, of the same numerical body which died, in all the essential and integral parts of it, rendering it, in a reunion of or with the soul, immortal, or of an eternal duration, in blessedness or misery. And,—

Obs. IV. The doctrine of the resurrection is a fundamental principle of the gospel, the faith whereof is indispensably necessary unto the obedience and consolation of all that profess it.

I call it a principle of the gospel, not because it was absolutely first revealed therein. It was made known under the old testament, and was virtually included in the first promise. In the faith of it the patriarchs lived and died; and it is testified unto in the psalms and prophets. With respect hereunto did the ancients confess that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," seeking another city and country, wherein they should live with God for ever. They desired and looked for "an heavenly country," wherein their persons should dwell, Heb. 11:16. And this was with relation to God's covenant with them: wherein, as it follows, "God was not ashamed to be called their God,"—that is, their God in covenant; which relation could never be broken. And therefore our Saviour proves the resurrection from thence, because if the dead rise not again, the covenant-relation between God and his people must cease, Matt. 22:31, 32. Hence also did they take especial care about their dead bodies and their burial, not merely out of respect unto natural order and decency, but to express their faith of the resurrection. So our apostle says, that "by faith Joseph gave

commandment concerning his bones," Heb. 11:22; and their disposal into a burying-place is rehearsed by Stephen as one fruit of their faith, Acts 7:15, 16. Job gives testimony unto his faith herein, chap. 19:25, 26. So doth David also, Ps. 16:9, 10, and in sundry other places. And Isaiah is express to the same purpose, chap. 26:19, "Thy dead shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." This God proposeth for the comfort of the prophet, and all those who were either persecuted or slain in those days for righteousness' sake. Their resurrection is both directly and emphatically expressed. And whereas some would wrest the words to signify no more but the deliverance and exaltation of those who were in great distress, yet they must acknowledge that it is expressed in allusion to the resurrection of the dead; which is therefore asserted in the words, and was believed in the church. The same also is taught in Ezekiel's vision of the vivification of dry bones, chap. 37; which, although it declared the restoration of Israel from their distressed condition, yet it did so with allusion to the resurrection at the last day, without a supposition of the faith whereof the vision had not been instructive. And many other testimonies to the same purpose might be insisted on. I do not, therefore, reckon this a principle of the doctrine of the gospel, absolutely and exclusively unto the revelations of the Old Testament, but on three other reasons:—

1. Because it is most clearly, evidently, and fully taught and declared therein. It was, as sundry other important truths, made known under the old testament sparingly and obscurely. But "life and immortality," with this great means of them both, were "brought to light by the gospel," 2 Tim. 1:10; all things concerning them being made plain, clear, and evident.

2. Because of that solemn confirmation and pledge of it which was given in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This was wanting under the old testament, and therefore the faith of men might ofttimes be greatly shaken about it. For whereas death seized on all men, and that penally, in the execution of the sentence of the law,—whence they were for fear of it obnoxious to bondage all their days, Heb. 2:14, 15,—they had not received any pledge or instance of a recovery from its power, or the taking off that sentence and penalty. But Christ dying for us, and that directly under the sentence and curse of the law, yet conquering both death and law, being raised again, the pains or bonds of death being loosed, hath given a full confirmation and absolute

assurance of our resurrection. And thus it is said, that "he brought life and immortality to light" by "abolishing of death," 2 Tim. 1:10; that is, the power of it, that it should not hold us for ever under its dominion, 1 Cor. 15:54–57.

3. Because it hath a peculiar influence into our obedience under the gospel. Under the old testament the church had sundry motives unto obedience taken from temporal things, namely, prosperity and peace in the land of Canaan, with deliverance out of troubles and distresses. Promises hereof made unto them the Scripture abounds withal, and thereon presseth them unto obedience and diligence in the worship of God. But we are now left unto promises of invisible and eternal things, which cannot be fully enjoyed but by virtue of the resurrection from the dead. And therefore these promises are made unspeakably more clear and evident, as also the things promised unto us, than they were unto them: and so our motives and encouragements unto obedience are unspeakably advanced above theirs. This may well, therefore, be esteemed as an especial principle of the doctrine of the gospel. And,—

(1.) It is an animating principle of gospel obedience, because we are assured thereby that nothing we do therein shall be lost. In general the apostle proposeth this as our great encouragement, that "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love," Heb. 6:10; and shows us the especial way whereby it shall be remembered. Nothing is more fatal unto any endeavours, than an apprehension that men do in them spend their strength in vain, and their labour for nought. This makes the hands of men weak, their knees feeble, and their hearts fearful. Nor can any thing deliver us from a slothful despondency but an assurance that the fruit of our endeavours shall be called over again. And this is given us alone by the faith of the resurrection of the dead, when they shall awake again and sing who dwell in the dust; and then shall "the righteous be had in everlasting remembrance." Let no man fear the loss of his work, unless it be such as the fire will consume; when it will be to his advantage to suffer that loss, and to have it so consumed. Not a good thought, word, or work, but shall have a new life given unto it, and have as it were a share in the resurrection.

(2.) We are assured hereby that such things shall not only be remembered, but also rewarded. It is unto the righteous, as we have observed, not only a "resurrection from the dead," but a "resurrection unto life," that is, eternal, as their reward. And this is that which either doth or ought to give life and diligence unto our obedience. So Moses, in what he did and suffered for Christ, had "respect unto the recompence of reward," Heb. 11:26. God hath put the

declaration hereof into the foundation of all our obedience in the covenant: "I am thy exceeding great reward," Gen. 15:1 And at the close of it, the Lord Jesus doth not think it enough to declare that he will come himself, but also, that "his reward is with him," Rev. 22:12. Some have foolishly supposed that this reward from God must needs infer merit in ourselves, whereas "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ," and not the wages of our works, as death is of sin, Rom. 6:23. It is such a reward as is absolutely a free gift, a gift of grace; "and if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work," Rom. 11:6. The same thing cannot be of works and grace also, of our own merit and of the free gift of God. And others, it is to be feared, under a mistaken pretence of grace, do keep off themselves from a due respect unto this gracious reward, which the Lord Christ hath appointed as the blessed issue and end of our obedience. But hereby they deprive themselves of one great motive and encouragement thereunto, especially of an endeavour that their obedience may be such, and the fruits of it so abound, that the Lord Christ may be signally glorified in giving out a gracious reward unto them at the last day. For whereas he hath designed, in his own grace and bounty, to give us such a glorious reward, and intendeth by the operation of his Spirit, to make us fit to receive it, or "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. 1:12, our principal respect unto this reward is, that we may receive it with an advantage of glory and honour unto our Lord Jesus. And the consideration hereof, which is conveyed unto us through the faith of the resurrection, is a chief animating principle of our obedience.

(3.) It hath the same respect unto our consolation: "For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. 15:19; that is, if we regard only outward things in this world, reproaches, scornings, revilings, troubles, persecutions, have been the lot of most of them who so hoped in Christ. 'But is this all which we shall have from him, or by him?' Probably as to outward things it will prove so to most of us in this world, if it come not to greater extremities: "Then are we of all men most miserable." But stay a while; these things will be all called over again at the resurrection (and that is time enough), and all things be put into another posture. See 2 Thess. 1:6–10. We have, therefore, no reason to despond for what may befall us in this life, nor at what distress this flesh we carry about us may be put unto. We are, it may be, sometimes ready to faint, or to think much of the pains we put ourselves unto in religious duties, especially when our bodies, being weak and crazy, would

willingly be spared, or of what we may endure and undergo; but the day is coming that will recompense and make up all. This very flesh, which we now thus employ under its weaknesses in a constant course of the most difficult duties, shall be raised out of the dust, purified from all its infirmities, freed from all its weaknesses, made incorruptible and immortal, to enjoy rest and glory unto eternity. And we may comfort ourselves with these words, 1 Thess. 4:18.

Κρίμα αἰώνιον. The fourth principle mentioned is κρίμα αἰώνιον. This is the immediate consequent of the resurrection of the dead. Men shall not be raised again to live another life in this world, and as it were therein to make a new adventure; but it is to give an account of what is past, and to "receive what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil." And because there are no outward, visible transactions between God and the souls of men after their departure out of this world, nor any alteration to be made as to their eternal state and condition, this judgment is spoken of as that which immediately succeeds death itself: Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment." This judgment is sure, and there is nothing between death and it that it takes notice of. But as to some, there may be a very long space of time between the one and the other; neither shall judgment be administered until after the resurrection from the dead, and by means thereof. And when all the race of mankind appointed thereunto have lived and died according to their allotted seasons, then shall judgment ensue on them all. Κρίμα. Κρίμα is commonly used for a "condemnatory sentence." Therefore some think that it is only the judgment of wicked and ungodly men that is intended. And indeed the day of judgment is most frequently spoken of in the Scripture with respect thereunto. See 2 Thess. 1:7–10, Jude 14, 15, 2 Pet. 2:9. And this is partly because the remembrance of it is suited to put an awe upon the fierceness, pride, and rage, of the spirits of men, rushing into sin as the horse into the battle; and partly that it might be a relief unto the godly under all, either their persecutions from their cruelty, or temptations from their prosperity. But in reality the judgment is general, and all men, both good and bad, must stand in their lot therein: "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me," Rom. 14:10, 11. And this is that which is here intended. As the resurrection of the dead that precedes belongs to all, so doth the judgment that follows. And this our apostle expresseth by κρίσις, a word of the same original and signification with κρίμα.

Αἰώνιον. This κρίμα, or "judgment," is said to be αἰώνιον. דין עולמים is the eleventh fundamental article of the present Jewish creed. Two of the Targums, as a supplement of that speech, which they suppose defective, וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיו, Gen. 4:8, "And Cain said to his brother Abel," add a disputation between the brothers about eternal judgment, with rewards and punishments; which they suppose Cain to have denied, and Abel to have asserted. And as there is no doubt but that it was one principal article of the faith of the church before the flood, so it is probable that it was much opposed and derided by that corrupt, violent, and wicked generation which afterwards perished in their sins. Hence Enoch's prophecy and preaching among them was to confirm the faith of the church therein, Jude 14, 15. And probably the "hard speeches" which are specified as those which God would severely avenge, were their contemptuous mockings and despisings of God's coming to judgment; as Peter plainly intimates, 2 Pet. 3:3–5. This seems to be the great controversy which the church before the flood had with that ungodly generation, namely, whether there were a future judgment or no; in the contempt whereof the world fell into all profligacy of abominable wickednesses. And as God gave testimony to the truth in the prophecy of Enoch, so he visibly determined the whole matter on the side of the church in the flood, which was an open pledge of eternal judgment. And hence these words, "The Lord cometh," became the appeal of the church in all ages, 1 Cor. 16:22. Αἰώνιον respects not the duration of this judgment, but its end and effect. For it shall not be of a perpetual duration and continuance; which to fancy is both absurd in nature and inconsistent with the proper end of it,—which is, to deliver men over unto their everlasting lot and portion. And it is both curious, needless, and unwarrantable, to inquire of what continuance it shall be, seeing God hath given no revelation thereof. Neither is the mind of man capable of making any tolerable conjecture concerning the process of the infinite wisdom of Christ in this matter. Neither do we know, as to time or continuance, what will be necessary therein, to the conviction and confusion of impenitent sinners, or as to the demonstration of his own righteousness and glory. It may be esteemed an easy, but will be found our safest wisdom, to silence even our thoughts and inquiries in all things of this nature, where we cannot trace the express footsteps of divine revelation. And this judgment is called "eternal,"—1. In opposition to the temporal judgments which are or have been passed on men in this world, which will be all then called over again and revised. Especially it is so with respect unto a threefold judgment:—(1.) That which passed upon the Lord Christ himself, when he was condemned as a

malefactor and blasphemer. He never suffered that sentence to take place quietly in the world, but from the first he sent his Spirit to argue, reason, and plead his cause in the world, John 16:8–11. This he ever did, and ever will maintain, by his church. Yet there is no absolute determination of the case. But when this day shall come, then shall he condemn every tongue that was against him in judgment, and all his adversaries shall be confounded. (2.) All those condemnatory sentences, whether unto death or other punishments, which almost in all ages have been given against his disciples or true believers. With the thoughts and prospect hereof did they always relieve themselves under false judgments and cruel executions. For they have had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they have been stoned and sawn asunder, tempted and slain with the sword; they have wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; not accepting deliverance," (upon the world's terms,) "that they might obtain a better resurrection;" as Heb. 11:35–37. In all these things they "possessed their souls in patience," following the example of their Master, "committing themselves unto Him that judgeth righteously," 1 Pet. 2:23. (3.) The false sentences which, under their provocations, professors have passed on one another. See 1 Cor. 4:3–5. 2. Because it is "judicium inevitabile," an "unavoidable sentence," which all men must stand or fall by; for "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that is the judgment." This judgment is no more avoidable unto any man than death itself, from which the experience of some thousands of years leaves unto men no hope of escape. 3. Because in it and by it an unchangeable determination of all men's estate and condition is made for eternity,—the judgment which disposeth of men unalterably into their eternal estate, whether of blessedness or of misery.

Two things must be yet further spoken unto, to clear this great principle of our faith: first, the general nature of this eternal judgment; and then the evidences we have of its truth and certainty.

First, The general concerns of this eternal judgment are all of them plainly expressed in the Scriptures, which declare the nature of it:—

1. As to its time, there is a determined and unalterable day fixed for it: "God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness," Acts 17:31. And this time is commonly called "the day of judgment," Matt. 10:15, 11:22, 24, 12:36; Mark 6:11; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 4:17. And this day being fixed in the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God, can no more be either hastened or deferred than God himself can be changed. Until this appointed

time comes, whatever falls out, he will satisfy his wisdom and glory in his ordinary government of the world, interwoven with some occasional extraordinary judgments; and therein he calls all his own people to be satisfied. For this precise time, the knowledge of it is among the principal secrets of his sovereignty, which he hath, for reasons suited to his infinite wisdom, laid up in his own eternal bosom. Hence is that of our Saviour, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son," (that is, in and by the human nature,) "but the Father," Mark 13:32; which is the highest expression of an unrevealable divine secret. God hath not only not revealed it, but he hath decreed not to reveal it. All inquiries about it are not only sinfully curious, but foolish and impious. Then it is certain, when all things foretold in the Scripture are accomplished, when the obedience of all the elect is completed, and the measure allotted unto the wickedness of the world in the patience of God is filled up; then, and not before, the end shall be. In the meantime, when we see a man old, weak, diseased, nature being decayed and infirmities abounding, we may judge that his death is not far off, though we know not when he will die: so, seeing the world come to that state and condition, so weakened and decayed as unto its principal end that it is scarce any longer able to bear the weight of its own wickedness, nor supply the sinful lusts of its inhabitants; seeing all sorts of sins, new and old, heard and unheard of, perpetrated everywhere in the light of the sun, and countenanced with atheistical security; as also, considering that the gospel seems to have finished its work where it is preached, with all sorts of signs of the like nature,—we may safely conclude that the end of all things is approaching.

2. There is the judge, which is Jesus Christ. Originally and absolutely this is the judgment of God, of him who made the world; and therefore is it often said that God shall judge the world, Deut. 32:35, 36; Eccles. 12:14. "God, the judge of all," Heb. 12:23. But the actual administration of it is committed unto Jesus Christ alone, to be exercised visibly in his human nature, Rom. 14:10; Dan. 7:13; Matt. 16:27, 19:28; John 5:22–27; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7, and many other places. And herein, in the same individual person, he shall act the properties of both his natures. For as he shall visibly and gloriously appear in his human nature exalted to the supreme place of judicature, and invested with sovereign power and authority overall flesh, Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rom. 14:10; so he shall act the power and omniscience of his deity in upholding the whole state of the creation in judgment, and in the discovery of the hearts and comprehension of the thoughts, words, and actions of all the children of

men, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. And herein, as all the holy angels shall accompany him, and attend upon him, as ministers, assistants, and witnesses unto his righteous judgments, Matt. 25:31; Luke 9:26; Jude 14, 15; Dan. 7:10; so also in the judgment of fallen angels and the reprobate world, the saints, acquitted, justified, glorified in the first place, shall concur with him in this judgment, by applauding his righteousness and holiness with their unanimous suffrage, Isa. 3:14; Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3. For,—

3. As to the outward manner of this judgment, it shall be with solemnity and great glory, 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Jude 14, 15; Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 20:11, 12. And this shall be partly for the demonstration of the glory and honour of Jesus Christ, who hath been so despised, reproached, persecuted in the world; and partly to fill the hearts of sinners with dread and terror, as Rev. 6:15–17, where this judgment is represented. And the order of this judgment will be,—(1.) That all the elect shall first be acquitted and pronounced blessed; for they join in with the Lord Christ in the judgment of the world, which they could not do if themselves were not first freed and exalted. (2.) The devil and his angels shall be judged, and that on three general heads:—[1.] Of their original apostasy; [2.] Of the death of Christ; [3.] Of persecution. (3.) The world of wicked men; probably, [1.] Hypocrites in the church; [2.] All others without. For,—

4. The persons to be judged are, (1.) Fallen angels, 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Matt. 25:41. (2.) All men universally, without exception, Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:9, 10; Matt. 25:31, 32. In especial, [1.] All the godly, all such as have believed and obeyed the gospel, shall be judged, Luke 21:36; Rom. 14:12; 2 Tim. 4:8: whether all their sins shall be then called over and made known unto others, seeing they are known to Him who is more in himself and unto us than all the world besides, I question. [2.] All the ungodly and impenitent sinners, Deut. 32:35; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 15.

5. The rule whereby all men shall be judged is the law of their obedience made known unto them. As, (1.) The Gentiles before the coming of Christ shall be judged by the law of nature, which all of them openly transgressed, Rom. 2:12–14. (2.) The Jews of the same time by the law, and the light into redemption from sin superadded thereunto; that is, by the rule, doctrine, precepts, and promises, of the law and prophets. (3.) The gospel unto all men unto whom it hath been offered or preached, Rom. 2:16. The rule of judgment at the last day neither is nor shall be any other but what is preached every day in the dispensation of the gospel. No man shall be able to complain of a surprisal, or pretend ignorance of the law whereby he is to be judged. The sentence of it is

proposed unto them continually. In the word of the gospel is the eternal condition of all the sons of men positively determined and declared. And all these things are at large insisted on by others.

Secondly, The evidence which God hath given concerning this future judgment, whereon the certainty of it as to us doth depend, may also be considered; and,—

1. God hath planted a presumption and sense of it on the minds and hearts of men by nature, from whence it is absolutely and eternally inseparable. Conscience is nothing but that judgment which men do make, and which they cannot but make, of their moral actions with reference unto the supreme future judgment of God. Hence the apostle treating of this future judgment, Rom. 2:12–16, diverts to show what evidence all mankind had in the meantime that such a judgment there should be, verses 14, 15; and this he declares to consist in their own unavoidable thoughts concerning their own actions, good or evil. This in the meanwhile accused them, and forced them to own a judgment to come. Yea, this is the proper language of conscience unto sinners on all occasions. And so effectual was this evidence on the minds of the heathen, that they generally consented into a persuasion, that by one or other, somewhere or other, a future judgment would be exercised with respect unto things done in this world. Fabulous inventions and traditions they mixed in abundance with this conviction, as Rom. 1:21; but yet this made up the principal notions whereby a reverence unto a divine Being was preserved in their minds. And those who were wise and sober among them thought it sufficient to brand a person as impious and wicked, to deny an unseen judgment of men's actions out of this world; wherewith Cato reproached Cæsar in the business of Catiline. This sense being that which keeps mankind within some tolerable bounds in sin, the psalmist prays that it may be increased in them, Ps. 10:13. See Gen. 20:11.

2. The working of reason on the consideration of the state of all things in this world, complies with the innate principles and dictates of conscience in this testimony. We suppose those concerning whom we treat do own the being of God, and his providence in the government of the world. Others deserve not the least of our consideration. Now those who are under the power of that acknowledgment and persuasion must and do believe that God is infinitely just and righteous, infinitely wise and holy, and that he cannot otherwise be. But yet when they come to consider how these divine properties are exerted in the providential government of the world, which all ages, persons, and places, must of necessity be subject unto and disposed by, they are at a loss. The final

impunity of flagitious sinners in this world; the unrelieved oppressions, afflictions, and miseries of the best; the prosperity of wicked, devilish designs; the defeating and overthrow of holy, just, righteous undertakings and endeavours; promiscuous accidents to all sorts of persons, however differenced by piety or impiety; the prosperous course of men proud and blasphemous, who oppose God in principles and conversation as far as they are able; the secret, undiscovered murders of martyrs and innocents in inquisitions and dungeons; the extreme confusion that seems to be in all things here below; with other things of the like kind innumerable, are ready to gravel and perplex the minds of men in this matter. They have greatly exercised the thoughts even of the saints of God, and tried their faith, as is evident, Ps. 73:4–17; Jer. 12:1, 2; Hab. 1:3, 4, 13; Job 21:5–8, etc. And the consideration hereof turned some of the wisest heathens unto atheism or outrageous blasphemies at their dying hours. But in this state even reason, rightly exerted, will lead men to conclude, that, upon the supposition of a divine Being and providence, it must needs be that all these things shall be called over again, and then receive a final decision and determination, whereof in this world they are not capable. And among the heathens there were proverbial speeches, which they uttered on occasion of great distresses, which signified no less; as, "Est profecto Deus qui hæc videt." For,—

(1.) Upon a due examination it will quickly appear, that the moral actions of men with respect unto God, in the way of sin and obedience, are such as that it is utterly impossible that judgment should be finally exercised towards them in things visible and temporal, or that in this world they should receive "a just recompence of reward." For whereas they have an aspect unto men's utmost end, which is eternal, they cannot be justly or rightly stated but under punishments and rewards eternal, Rom. 1:32; 2 Thess. 1:6. Seeing, therefore, no full judgment can possibly pass upon the sins of men in this world, because all that can befall them is infinitely short of their demerit, even reason itself cannot but be satisfied that God, in his infinite wisdom and sovereignty, should put off the whole judgment unto that day, wherein all penalties shall be equalled to their crimes, and rewards unto obedience. So when our apostle reasoned before Felix about "righteousness and temperance," knowing how unavailable his arguments would be without it against the contrary sin and evil, from the impunity and prosperity of such sinners in the world, to make them effectual he adds the consideration of the "judgment to come," Acts 24:25. Here reason may relieve itself in the midst of all cross occurrences of providence, and such as are not

only contrary to our desires, but directly opposite unto our judgments as to what is suitable to infinite justice and wisdom. The final determination of things is not made here; nor is it possible it should so be, on the ground now assigned.

(2.) Should God take men off from a respect unto future eternal judgment, and constantly dispense rewards and punishments in this world, according unto what the wisest of men can apprehend just and equal (which, if any thing, must satisfy, without a regard to eternal judgment), as it would be most unequal and unrighteous, so it might be an occasion of greater wickedness than the world is yet pestered withal. Unrighteous and unequal it must be unavoidably, because the judgment supposed must pass according unto what men are able to discern and judge upon; that is, outward actions only. Now this were unrighteous in God, who sees and knows the heart, and knows that actions have their good and evil, if not solely, yet principally, from their respect thereunto. "The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," said Hannah, when Eli judged her drunk, but God saw that she prayed, 1 Sam. 2:3. There is nothing more evident than that it is inconsistent with and destructive of all divine perfections, that God should pass a decretory sentence on the actions of men according to what appears unto us to be just and equal. This, therefore, God declines, namely, to judge according to a rule that we can comprehend, Isa. 11:3, Rom. 2:2. But,—

(3.) Suppose that God should in this world distribute rewards and punishments constantly according to what he sees in the hearts and inward dispositions of the minds of men, it is no less evident that it would fill all men with unspeakable confusion, and prevail with them to judge that indeed there is no certain rule of judgment, no unmovable bounds and limits of good and evil; seeing it would be absolutely impossible that by them the judgments of God should be reduced unto any such rules or bounds, the reasons of them being altogether unknown. This the Scripture plainly owns, Ps. 77:19, 36:6. Wherefore, —

(4.) Should God visibly and constantly have dispensed rewards and punishments in this world according to the rule of men's knowledge, comprehension, and judgment,—which alone hath an appearance of being satisfactory,—it would have been a principle, or at least the occasion, of a worse kind of atheism than any yet the earth hath been pestered withal. For it could not have been but that the most would have made the judgment of man the only rule of all that they did, which God must be obliged to comply withal, or be unrighteous; which is absolutely to dethrone him, and leave him only to be

the executioner of the wills and reasons of men. But from all these, and the like perplexities, reason itself may quietly take sanctuary in submission unto sovereign wisdom as to present dispensations, in a satisfaction that it is not only suitable unto, but necessary on the account of divine justice, that there should be a future eternal judgment, to pass according to truth upon all the ways and actions of men. And hereby doth God keep up in the hearts of men a testimony unto this great principle of our profession. Therefore, when our apostle reasoned before Felix concerning such duties and sins as were discoverable by the light of nature, namely, righteousness and temperance,—with respect to both which he was openly and flagitiously guilty,—he adds this principle concerning judgment to come; the truth whereof the conscience and reason of the wretch himself could not but comply withal, Acts 24:25.

3. God hath given testimony hereunto in all the extraordinary judgments which he hath executed since the foundation of the world. It is not for nothing that he doth sometimes, that he doth so frequently, go out of or beside the common beaten tracks and paths of providence. He doth it to intimate unto the world, that things are not always to pass at their present rate, but are one day to be called to another account. In great judgments "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men," Rom. 1:18; and an intimation is given of what he will further do hereafter. For as "he leaves not himself without witness" in respect of his goodness and patience, "in that he doeth good, and giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling men's hearts with food and gladness," Acts 14:17; so he gives testimony to his righteousness and holiness in the judgments that he executes, Ps. 9:16. For whereas goodness and mercy are the works wherein God is as it were delighted, he gives testimony unto them, together with his patience and long-suffering, in the ordinary course of his dispensations; but judgment in severity he calls "his strange work," that which he proceeds not unto but on great provocations, Isa. 28:21,—he satisfieth his holy wisdom with some extraordinary necessary instances of it. And thus he hath himself singled out some particular instances, which he gave on purpose that they might be as pledges of the future judgment, and hath given us a rule in them how we are to judge of all his extraordinary acts of the same kind. Such was the flood whereby the world was destroyed in the days of Noah; which Peter affirms expressly was a type to shadow out the severity of God in the last final judgment, 2 Pet 2:5, 3:5–7. Of the like nature was his "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly," 2 Pet. 2:6.

He made them a terrifying example, "that others should hear, and fear, and do no more so presumptuously." But now, whereas God hath not, in the space of four thousand years, brought any such judgment on any other places or persons, if this example had respect only unto this world, it must needs have lost all its force and efficacy upon the minds of sinners. Wherefore it did nearly respect the judgment to come, God giving therein an instance what obstinate and profligate sinners are to look for at that great day. Wherefore Jude says expressly, they are "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," verse 7. And this is the language of all God's extraordinary judgments either on persons or places in the world. Let men's sins be what they will, God can endure in his long-suffering the sins of one as well as another, among "the vessels of wrath" that are "fitted for destruction," and so he doth ordinarily, or for the most part; but yet he will sometimes reach out his hand from heaven in an extraordinary instance of vengeance, on purpose that men may know that things shall not for ever be passed over in such a promiscuous manner, but that he hath "appointed another day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness." And for this reason such signal judgments as are evidences of the future eternal judgment of God, are in the Scripture expressed in words that seem to declare that judgment itself, rather than the types of it, Isa. 34:4; Rev. 6:13, 14; Dan. 7:9, 10; Matt. 24:29, 30. But,—

4. God hath not absolutely intrusted the evidence and preservation of this important truth, which is the foundation of all religion, unto the remainders of innate light in the minds and consciences of men, which may be variously obscured, until it be almost utterly extinguished; nor yet unto the exercise of reason on the consideration of the present administration of providence in this world, which is ofttimes corrupted, depraved, and rendered useless; nor yet unto the influence which extraordinary judgments may have upon the minds of men, which some fortify themselves against by their obstinacy in sin and security; but he hath abundantly testified unto it by express revelation from the beginning of the world, now recorded in his word, by which all men must be tried, whether they will or no. It may not be doubted but that Adam was acquainted with this truth immediately from God himself. He was so, indeed, in the commination given against sin at first, especially as it was explained in the curse after he had actually sinned. And this was that which was taught him in the threatening, and which his eyes were open to see clearly after his fall, when he immediately became afraid of God as his judge, Gen. 3:10. Nor can it be doubted but that he communicated the knowledge of it unto his posterity. But whereas they quickly,

in that profligacy in all wickedness which they gave themselves unto, had, together with all other sacred truths, lost the remembrance of it, or, at least, practically despised and scoffed at the instruction which they had received therein, God knowing the necessity of it, either to restrain them in their flagitious courses, or to give them a warning that might leave them without excuse, makes a new express revelation of it unto Enoch, and by him to mankind: Jude 14, 15, "For Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." And this is the second new revelation that is recorded before the flood. There were two revelations that were the foundation of the church; the one concerning future judgment, in the threatening; the other concerning the recovery and restoration of mankind, in the promise. Both seem to have been equally neglected by that cursed generation. But God solemnly revived them both; the first by Enoch, the latter by Noah, who was the "preacher of righteousness," 2 Pet. 2:5, in whom the Spirit of Christ preached unto them who are now in prison, 1 Pet 3:19, 20. And this old prophecy was revived by the Holy Ghost, partly that we might know that God from the beginning of the world gave public testimony unto and warning of his future eternal judgment; and partly to acquaint us that in the latter days men would break out into an excess and outrage in sin and wickedness, like that of those before the flood, wherein it would be necessary that they should be restrained, or terrified, or warned, by preaching unto them this truth of the judgment to come. After this the testimonies given unto it in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments do so abound, and are so obvious to all, that it is no way needful particularly to produce them.

This principle being thus cleared and confirmed, it may not be amiss to show what practical improvement it doth require. And,—

Obs. V. It is manifest that there is no duty in religion that is not, or ought not to be, influenced by the consideration of it.

I shall only name some of them whereunto it is in an especial manner applied by the Holy Ghost himself:—1. Ministers of the gospel ought to dwell greatly on the consideration of it, as it is represented in its terror and glory, that they may be excited and stirred up to deal effectually with the souls of men, that they fall not under the vengeance of that day. So our apostle affirms that it was

with himself; for having asserted the truth and certainty hereof in these words, "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done," he adds thereunto, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," 2 Cor. 5:10, 11;—'Duly considering what will be the state of things with all men in that day, how dreadful the Lord Christ will be therein unto impenitent sinners, and what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," I use all diligence to prevail with men to get such an interest in the peace and reconciliation tendered in the gospel, that they may be accounted worthy to stand in that day.' See Col. 1:28. And without a continual due apprehension hereof, it cannot be but that men will grow cold, and dead, and formal in their ministry. If the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ be not continually in our eye, whatever other motives we may have unto diligence in our work, we shall have little regard to the souls of men, whether they live or die in their sins: without which, whatever we do is of no acceptance with God.

2. The consideration of it is peculiarly applied by the Holy Ghost against security in worldly enjoyments, and those evils wherewith it is usually accompanied. So it is made use of by our blessed Saviour, Luke 21:34–36; and so by our apostle, 1 Thess. 5:2–8. And this also is expressed in the type of it, or the flood in the days of Noah;—nothing in it was more terrible unto men than that they were surprised in the midst of their enjoyments and employments, Matt. 24:38, 39.

3. It is in like manner frequently applied unto the consolation of believers, under the troubles, difficulties, and persecutions, which in this life they undergo, 2 Thess. 1:6–10: even the terror and the glory of it, with the vengeance which shall be executed in it, are proposed as the matter of highest consolation unto believers; as indeed they are, on many accounts not here to be insisted on. See Isa. 35:3, 4; Luke 21:28, 31; Rev. 19:1–7. And therefore are we required to look for, long for, and, what lies in us, hasten to this day of the Lord, when, on all accounts, our joy shall be full, 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:20.

4. It is in like manner everywhere applied to the terror of ungodly and impenitent sinners, 1 Thess. 5:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:6–9; Jude 14, 15, and in many other places not to be numbered.

And unto these ends, in an especial manner, is the consideration of it to be by us improved.

These, therefore, (that we may return to the text,) are those fundamental principles of Christian religion which the apostle calls "the doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands." This is a summary of that doctrine wherein they were to be instructed who were to be baptized, and to have imposition of hands thereon.

Βαπτιτμῶν. But there occurs no small difficulty from the use of the word "baptisms," in the plural number; for it is not anywhere else in the Scripture so used, when the baptism of the gospel is intended, and the Jewish washings are often so expressed. The Syriac interpreter, which is our most ancient translation, renders it in the singular number, "baptism;" but because there is a full agreement in all original copies, and the ancient expositions also concur therein, none have yet adventured to leave the original, and follow that translation, but all generally who have commented on the place have considered how the word may be understood and explained. And herein they have fallen into such various conjectures as I shall not spend time in the consideration and refutation of, but content myself with the naming of them, that the reader may use his own judgment about them. Some, therefore, suppose that mention is made of "baptisms" because of the baptism of John and Christ, which, as they judge, were not only distinct but different. But the Jews were indifferently baptized by the one or the other, and it was but one ordinance unto them. Some, because of the many baptisms or washings among the Jews, into the room of all which the mystery of our baptism doth succeed. But this of all other conjectures is the least probable; and if any respect could be had thereunto, it would have been necessary to have mentioned "baptism" in the singular number. Some think respect is had unto the several sorts of gospel baptism, which are usually referred unto three heads, "fluminis," "flaminis," "sanguinis,"—of the water by external washing, of the Spirit by internal purifying, of afflictions unto blood by both. And thus the apostle should not only intend the baptism of water, but also the whole spiritual cleansing of the soul and conscience, which was required of men at their initiation into Christian religion, called ἐπερώτημα συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς, 1 Pet. 3:21; with a purpose to seal their confession with their blood if called thereunto, and therein being baptized with the baptism wherewith the Lord Christ in his sufferings was baptized, Matt. 20:23. And this hath in it much of probability, and which, next unto what I have fixed on, I should embrace. Some suppose regard may be had unto the stated times of baptism, which were fixed and observed in the primitive church, when they baptized persons publicly but twice or thrice in the

year. But it is certain that this custom was not then introduced. Some betake themselves unto an enallage of number; which, indeed, is not unusual, but there is nothing here in the text to give countenance unto a supposition of it.

Wherefore the most general interpretation of the words and meaning of the apostle is, that although baptism be but one and the same, never to be repeated or reiterated on the same subject, nor is there any other baptism or washing of the same kind, yet because the subjects of it, or those who were baptized, were many, every one of them being made partakers of the same baptism in special, that of them all is called "baptisms," or the baptism of the many.

All persons who began to attend unto the gospel were diligently instructed in the fore-mentioned principles, with others of an alike nature (for they are mentioned only as instances), before they were admitted unto a participation of this ordinance, with imposition of hands that ensued thereon; these, therefore, are called the "doctrine of baptisms," or the catechetical fundamental truths wherein those to be baptized were instructed, as being the things whereof they were to make a solemn profession.

But if we shall follow the other interpretation, and suppose that this "doctrine of baptisms" is an expression of a distinct principle by itself, then cannot the word by any means be restrained unto the baptism by water only. For although this be an important head of Christian doctrine, namely, the declaration, use, and end of our sacramental initiation into Christ and the profession of the gospel, yet no reason can be given why that should be called "baptisms," seeing it hath respect only to the thing itself, and not to the persons who are made partakers of it.

Admit, therefore, of this sense, that it is the doctrine concerning baptisms which is intended, and then the whole of what is taught, or the substance of it, concerning the sanctification and purification of the souls of men in their insition into and union with Christ, outwardly expressed in the sign of baptism, and wrought inwardly by the Spirit and grace of God, through the efficacy of the doctrine of the gospel, in opposition to all the legal and carnal washings among the Jews, is intended hereby. So the Lord Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," Eph. 5:25, 26. And indeed the doctrine hereof is among the rudiments of Christian religion.

But I yet adhere to the former exposition, and that also because unto "baptisms," "imposition of hands," whose nature we must nextly inquire into, is added.

Ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν. Some suppose that by this imposition of hands that rite in the church which was afterward called "confirmation," is intended. For whereas there were two sorts of persons that were baptized, namely, those that were adult at their first hearing of the gospel, and the infant children of believers, who were admitted to be members of the church; the first sort were instructed in the principles mentioned before they were admitted unto baptism, by the profession whereof they laid the foundation of their own personal right thereunto; but the other, being received as a part and branches of a family whereupon the blessing of Abraham was come, and to whom the promise of the covenant was extended, being thereon baptized in their infancy, were to be instructed in them as they grew up unto years of understanding. Afterwards, when they were established in the knowledge of these necessary truths, and had resolved on personal obedience unto the gospel, they were offered unto the fellowship of the faithful. And hereon, giving the same account of their faith and repentance which others had done before they were baptized, they were admitted into the communion of the church, the elders thereof laying their hands on them in token of their acceptation, and praying for their confirmation in the faith. Hence the same doctrines became previously necessary unto both these rites;—before baptism to them that were adult; and towards them who were baptized in infancy, before the imposition of hands. And I do acknowledge that this was the state of things in the apostolical churches, and that it ought to be so in all others. Persons baptized in their infancy ought to be instructed in the fundamental principles of religion, and make profession of their own faith and repentance, before they are admitted into the society of the church. But that in those first days of the first churches, persons were ordinarily after baptism admitted into their societies by imposition of hands, is nowhere intimated in the Scripture. And the whole business of confirmation is of a much later date, so that it cannot be here intended. For it must have respect unto, and express somewhat that was then in common use.

Now there is mention in the Scripture of a fourfold imposition of hands used by the Lord Christ and his apostles. The first was peculiar unto his own person, in the way of authoritative benediction. Thus, when he owned little children to belong to his covenant and kingdom, "he put his hands on them, and blessed

them," Mark 10:16. But this was peculiar to himself, who had all blessings in his power; and hereof this is the only instance. Secondly, This rite was used in the healing of diseases. They laid their hands on sick, weak, and impotent people, healing them in a miraculous manner, Luke 4:40; Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8. This was the sign of the communication of healing virtue from the Lord Christ by their ministry. Thirdly, Imposition of hands was used in the setting apart of persons to the office and work of the ministry, 1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22; Acts 6:6. The rite herein was derived from the Old Testament, Num. 8:10; the whole congregation laid their hands on the Levites in their consecration. And it was of old of common use among the Jews in the dedication of their rulers, rabbis, or teachers, being called by them סמיכה ידים. Fourthly, It was used by the apostles in the collation of the supernatural spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost unto them who were baptized, Acts 8:17, 19:6. In no other duties of religion was this rite made use of, as to any mention that is made thereof in the New Testament, or records concerning the practice of the primitive churches. The first of these, as we observed, was only a personal action of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in one single instance; so not here intended. The second was extraordinary also, and that wherein the generality of Christians were not concerned; nor can any reason be given why the mention of a thing extraordinary, occasional, and temporary, should be here inserted. The third was a rite of standing use in the church, and that wherein church-order is much concerned. But as to the use of it, one sort of persons only was concerned therein. And no just reason can be given why the apostle, from the doctrine of the first intrants of Christian religion, should proceed to the ordination of ministers, omitting all other rites of the church, especially that of the supper of the Lord, wherein so great a part of the worship of the church consisted. Besides, there is no ground to give a probability that the apostle should insert the observation of this rite, or the doctrine concerning it, in the same order and under the same necessity with those great fundamentals of faith, repentance, the resurrection, and eternal judgment.

Wherefore the imposition of hands in the last sense mentioned is that which most probably is intended by our apostle. For, 1. Adhering to our first interpretation as the most solid and firm, the "imposition of hands" intended, is a description of the persons that were to be instructed in the other fundamental principles, but is no principle itself. And this is not applicable unto any other of the uses of this rite. For, 2. This "laying on of hands" did commonly, if not constantly in those days, accompany or immediately follow baptism, Acts 8:13–

17, 19:6. And a thing this was of singular present use, wherein the glory of the gospel and its propagation were highly concerned. This was the state of things in the world: When, upon the preaching of the gospel, any were converted unto Christ, and upon their profession of faith and repentance were baptized, the apostles present (or if near unto them, they came on that purpose) laid their hands on them, whereon they received the Holy Ghost in a supernatural communication of evangelical gifts. And this, next to the preaching of the word, was the great means which the Lord Christ made use of in the propagation of the gospel. By the word he wrought internally, on the minds and consciences of men; and by these miraculous gifts he turned the thoughts of men to the consideration of what was preached, by what in an extraordinary manner was objected to their external senses. And this was not confined unto a few ministers of the word, and the like, but, as it appears from sundry places of Scripture, was common almost unto all believers that were baptized, Gal. 3:5; 1 Cor. 14:3. In the verse following mention is made of those who were made "partakers of the Holy Ghost,"—that is, of his miraculous gifts and operations, which were communicated by this imposition of hands; which therefore refers unto the same. After these times this rite was made use of on other occasions of the church, in imitation, no doubt, of this extraordinary action of the apostles; but there is no mention of it in the Scripture, nor was it in use in those days, and therefore cannot be here intended. And this is the most genuine interpretation of this place. Those mentioned were "the principles of the doctrine of Christ;" wherein, among others of the same importance, they were to be well instructed who were to be baptized, and thereon to have hands laid on them, whereby the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated unto them.

But we shall allow a room also for that other exposition of the words which is more generally received, and in the exclusion whereof, because it complies with the analogy of faith, I dare not be peremptory. And this is, that "the doctrine of laying on of hands" maketh one distinct principle of Christianity by itself. But then the thing signified is principally intended, namely, the communication of the Holy Ghost unto believers in his gifts and graces, ordinary and extraordinary, whereof this rite was the external sign. And as this was peculiar to the gospel, so it contained the principal verification of it. And this it did sundry ways:—1. Because the promises of the Lord Christ for the sending of him were eminently and visibly accomplished. It is known that when he was leaving the world he filled his disciples with an expectation of his

sending the Holy Ghost unto them; and he did not only propose this promise as their great supportment during his absence, but also suspended on its accomplishment all the duty which he required from them in the office he had called them unto. Therefore he commanded them to abide quietly at Jerusalem, without any public engagement into their work, until they had received the promise of the Spirit, Acts 1:4, 8. And when this was done, it gave a full and glorious testimony, not only unto his truth in what he had told them in this world, but also unto his present exaltation and acceptation with God, as Peter declares, Acts 2:33. 2. His gifts themselves were such, many of them, as consisted in miraculous operations, whereby God himself gave immediate testimony to the truth of the gospel: Heb. 2:4, "God himself bearing witness," (to the preachers of it,) "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." This made the doctrine concerning them of unconceivable importance unto believers of those days, as that whereby their faith and profession were eminently justified in the face of the world. 3. This dispensation of the Holy Ghost was peculiar to the times of the gospel, and was in itself a sufficient proof of the cessation of all legal ordinances. For it was the principal prophecy and promise under the old testament, that in the days of the Messiah the Holy Ghost should be so poured out, as I have at large elsewhere declared. And it was to be a consequent of his glorification, John 7:38, 39. Hence, by the argument of their receiving the Spirit, our apostle proves to the Galatians their freedom from the law, Gal. 3:2. Wherefore, 4. The doctrine concerning this dispensation of the Spirit was peculiar to the gospel, and so might be esteemed an especial principle of its doctrine. For although the church of the Jews believed in the Holy Ghost as one person in the Trinity, after their obscure manner of apprehension, yet they were strangers unto this dispensation of him in his gifts, though promised under the old testament, because not to be accomplished but under the new. Yea, John the Baptist, who in light into the mystery of the gospel outwent all the prophets that were before him, yet had not the knowledge hereof communicated unto him. For those who were only baptized with his baptism, and initiated thereby into the doctrine of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, "had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost;" that is, as unto this dispensation of him, Acts 19:2, 3. Hereupon our apostle, instructing them in the doctrine of the gospel, made use of this rite of the imposition of hands; whereon "the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied," verse 6. This, therefore, being so great and important a concern of the gospel, and this being the rite appointed to

represent it by, the doctrine concerning it,—namely, the promise of Christ to send the Holy Ghost, with the nature, use, and end of the gifts which he wrought in believers,—is expressed, and reckoned among the first principles of Christian religion. But the reader is at liberty to follow whether of these interpretations he pleaseth. And from the whole of what hath been discoursed we may take the ensuing observations:—

Obs. VI. Persons to be admitted into the church, and unto a participation of all the holy ordinances thereof, had need be well instructed in the important principles of the gospel.—We have here the rule of the apostle, and example of the primitive churches, for the ground of this doctrine. And it is necessary that such persons should be so instructed on their own part, as also on the part of the church itself. On their own part, because without it the ordinances themselves will be of little use unto them; for what benefit can any receive from that whose nature and properties he is unacquainted withal? And neither the nature nor use of the ordinances of the church can be understood without a previous comprehension of the fundamental principles of the gospel, as might be easily demonstrated. And it is so on the part of the church; for the neglect hereof was the chiefest occasion of the degeneracy of most churches in the world. By this means were the societies of them filled with ignorant, and consequently profane persons, by whom all their administrations were defiled, and themselves corrupted, as I have showed elsewhere. When once the care and diligence of the first churches, in the instruction of those whom they admitted into their communion, were laid aside, and an empty form taken up in the room of sedulous teaching, the churches themselves hastened into a fatal apostasy.

Obs. VII. It is not the outward sign, but the inward grace, that is principally to be considered in those ordinances or observances of the church which visibly consist in rites and ceremonies, or have them accompanying of them.—As in the rite of imposition of hands, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost was principally to be considered.

Hebrews 6:3

Καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσομεν, ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπῃ ὁ Θεός.

And this will we do, if so be that God permit.

These words contain two things:—1. The resolution of the apostle as to the matter and occasion before him: "And this will we do." 2. A limitation of that resolution by an express submission to the will and pleasure of God: "If so be that God permit."

Καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσομεν. As to the sense of the first, it is plain that the apostle in the foregoing verses had proposed or mentioned two things of very diverse natures. The first whereof is, "going on to perfection;" and the other, the "laying again of the foundation," verse 1. Hence it is doubted and inquired whether of these it be that the apostle hath respect unto in these words, "And this will we do."

"This will we do;" that is either, "We will go on to perfection," which was exhorted unto, verse 1, and so is the more remote antecedent; or "This will we do, laying again the foundation," which is the next antecedent, whereunto τοῦτο seems to relate. And this sundry expositors adhere unto. But there are some things which make it evident that respect is had herein to the former and more remote antecedent, namely, "going on to perfection." And they are, first, what the apostle saith, and then what he doth. 1. In what he saith, his manner of expressing these things is considerable; for as to the latter, he twice intimates his intention to omit their further handling: "Therefore leaving," or at present omitting, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ;" and, "not laying again the foundation," verse 1. Hereunto if we refer these words, "And this will we do, if God permit." they rather signify the present leaving of them than their further handling; and he not only declares his resolution to omit them, but also gives a sufficient reason why he would do so. And this is expressed in the last verses of the chapter foregoing. They had already had both time and means sufficient for their instruction in these principles: so that to inculcate them on those by whom they were learned and received was needless; and for those who had either not received them or rejected them, it was to no purpose further to treat with them about these things; which he confirms with a severe reason and dreadful consideration, verses 4–8. But things are otherwise expressed concerning the other antecedent. He speaks of it positively as that which was in his purpose and design. ' "Let us," saith he, "go on to perfection," I in teaching, you in learning; "and this will we do, if God permit." ' 2. His intention is no less evident from what he doth in this epistle. There is, indeed, in this chapter and the last chapter of it, mention made about repentance, faith, patience, obedience, the worship of God, and the like; but not as principles of doctrine, to be laid as a foundation, but as graces to be practised in the course of their

edification. But the main business he undertakes, and the work which he pursues, is the carrying on of these Hebrews to perfection by the declaration of the most sublime mysteries of the gospel, especially that which is among the chiefest of them, namely, the priesthood of Christ, and the prefiguration of it by that of Melchisedec. The whole series of this discourse depends on chap. 5:10, 11. Having declared unto them that he had many things to instruct them in concerning the priesthood of Christ, as shadowed out in the person and office of Melchisedec, he lets them know that he had also sundry discouragements in his design; which yet were not such but that he would break through them and pursue his intention. Only, to make his way as smooth and plain as conveniently he could, he deals with them a while about the removal of those hinderances which lay in his way on their part, and then returneth directly to his first proposal, and the handling of it, in the last verse of this chapter. This, therefore, is the sense of these words: 'For the reasons before insisted on, and afterwards to be added, I will proceed unto the declaration of the principal mysteries of the gospel, especially those which concern the priesthood of Christ; and thereby raise up the building of your faith and profession upon the foundation that hath been laid; whereby, through the grace of God, you may be carried on to perfection, and become skilful in the word of righteousness.'

Obs. I. No discouragements should deter the ministers of the gospel from proceeding in the declaration of the mysteries of Christ, whose dispensation is committed unto them, when they are called thereunto.—Among the various discouragements they meet withal, the least is not what ariseth from the dulness of them that hear. This our apostle had now in his eye in a particular manner, yet resolved to break through the consideration of it in the discharge of his duty. So it is with many still. Neither is any thing more irksome and grievous unto faithful preachers, than the incapacity of their hearers to receive gospel mysteries through their own negligence and sloth. But in this condition they have here an example for their guidance and direction.

And these things lie plain therein: 1. That they use all means, by warnings, persuasions, encouragements, and threatenings, to stir up their people out of their slothful, careless frame and temper. So doth our apostle with the Hebrews in this chapter, leaving nothing unsaid that might excite them unto diligence and a due improvement of the means of knowledge which they enjoyed. So will they do with them that "watch for their souls as those who must give an account;" and ministers of another sort have no concern in these matters. 2. As occasion offers itself, to proceed in their work. And that,—(1.) Because there are

among their hearers some concerning whom they are "persuaded of better things, and such as accompany salvation," as our apostle speaks, verse 9, whose edification is not to be neglected for the sinful sloth and ignorance of others. (2.) God is pleased sometimes to convey saving light to the minds of men, before very dark and ignorant, in and by the dispensation of the deepest mysteries of the gospel, without such preparatory instruction in the more obvious principles of it as is ordinarily required. Not knowing, therefore, by what ways or means, how or when, God will work upon the souls of men, it is their duty to proceed in the declaration of the whole counsel of God committed unto them, and leave the success of all unto Him by whom they are employed.

Ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπῃ ὁ Θεός. Secondly, The limitation of this resolution is expressed in those words, Ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπῃ ὁ Θεός,—"If God permit." There may be a threefold occasion of these words, or a respect unto three things in the will of God, and consequently a threefold exposition of them. For,—

1. Respect may be had merely and solely unto the unknown sovereign will and pleasure of God, and so no more is intended but that general limitation and expression of our absolute dependence on him, which we ought to bound all our resolutions withal. This our nature, and the nature of all our affairs, as they are in the hand of God, and at his disposal, do require of us. And therefore also it is expressly enjoined us, as a duty to be continually minded in all we undertake or do, James 4:13–15. If this be intended (as it is also, if not only), then it is as if he had said, 'If He in whose hand are my life, and breath, and all my ways, whose I am, whom I serve, and to whose disposal I willingly submit myself in all things, see good, and be pleased to continue my life, opportunity, his assistance, and all other things necessary to this work, I will proceed with my design and purpose to acquaint you with and instruct you in the great mysteries of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ.' See 1 Cor. 16:7.

2. Respect may be had unto the condition of the Hebrews, whose sloth and negligence in hearing the word he hath now under reproof, and the will or purpose of God concerning them. For he seems to intimate unto them that there may be some fear lest God should be so provoked by their former miscarriages as that he would not afford them the means of further instruction. For this is a thing which God often threatens, and which falls out oftener than we are aware of, yea, most nations of the earth are examples of this severity of God. So a word of the same importance is used unto this purpose, as to the turning away of the gospel from any persons or people, Acts 16:7, "They assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not,"—he permitted it not;

which is the same with forbidding them to preach the word in Asia, verse 6. And so the sense of the expression amounts to this, 'If God, whom I fear you have much provoked by your negligence and contempt of his word, will yet exercise patience and long-suffering towards you, and not cast you out of his care by forbidding me to proceed in my design, or depriving me of my opportunity,—if God hinder me not by reason of your unworthiness, but be graciously pleased to be with me in my designed work.'

3. There is a μείωσις in the words, wherein a further respect unto the will of God is included rather than expressed. For it is not a mere naked permission in God that the apostle intends, as if he should have said, 'If God let me alone, and, as it were, wink at what I am doing.' But there is a supposition in it of the continuance of God's gracious assistance and especial presence with him; without which he frequently declared that he could neither undertake nor accomplish any thing that lay before him. God can, in the beginning or middle of an epistle or a sermon, take us off when he pleaseth, if he do but withdraw his assistance from us. And all these respects unto the will of God are not only consistent, so as that the closing with one excludeth not another, but they are all of them plainly included in the apostle's intention, and are necessary to be taken in unto the right understanding of his words.

Obs. II. As it is our duty to submit ourselves in all our undertakings unto the will of God, so especially in those wherein his glory is immediately concerned. —In general we have a rule given us as to the most ordinary occasions of life, James 4:13–15. Not to do it, is to disavow our dependence on God; a fruit of carnal wisdom and security which God greatly abhorreth. Neither is there any thing which will so fill our lives with disappointment and vexation; for in vain shall any man, be his condition at present what it will, seek for rest or peace in any thing but the will of God. But especially is this required of us in those things wherein the glory of God himself is immediately concerned. Such are those here, with respect whereunto our apostle makes this deference unto the sovereign pleasure of God, "This will we do, if God permit,"—namely, the things which concern the instruction and edification of the church, which regard the glory of God in an especial manner. For,—1. All these things are under the especial care of God, and are ordered by peculiar wisdom. Not to submit ourselves absolutely in these things unto him, is to take his own things out of his hand, and to exalt our wisdom against his, as though we knew better what belonged unto his affairs than himself. 2. We come not to have any concernment in the things of God but upon his call, and hold it at his pleasure.

That is the rise and tenor of our ministry in the church, whatever it be. And is it not just and equal that we should wholly submit in our work unto his will, and rest in his pleasure? It may be we have many things in our view that are desirable unto us, many things we would think meet to engage our endeavours in, as supposing them to have a great tendency to the glory of God, in all which he hath determined contrary to our desires and aims. All our satisfaction lies in, and all our duty is to be bounded by, this submission.

Obs. III. Let them who are intrusted with means of light, knowledge, and grace, improve them with diligence, lest, upon their neglect, God suffer not his ministers further to instruct them

Hebrews 6: 4–6

Ἀδύνατον γάρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου, καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

Ἀδύνατον γάρ, "impossibile enim;" that is, "est,"—"it is impossible." Syr., אֶלָּא לָא מֶשְׁכְּחִין, "but they cannot." This respects the power of the persons themselves, and not the event of things; it may be not improperly as to the sense. Beza and Erasmus, "fieri non potest," "it cannot be." The same with "impossibile;" but the use of the word *ἀδύνατον* in the New Testament, which signifies sometimes only what is very difficult, not what is absolutely denied, makes it useful to retain the same word as in our translation, "for it is impossible."

Τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας. Syr., הָגוּן דְּחַדָּא זְבַן לְמַעֲמוּדִיתָא נְחֵתוּ, "those who one time" (or "once") "descended unto baptism;" of which interpretation we must speak afterwards. All others, "qui semel fuerint illuminati," "who were once illuminated." Only the Ethiopic follows the Syriac. Some read "illustrati," to the same purpose.

Γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. Vulg. Lat., "gustaverant etiam donum cœleste;" "etiam" for "et." Others express the article by the pronoun, by reason of its reduplication: "Et gustaverint donum illud cœleste," "and have tasted of that heavenly gift." Syr., "the gift that is from heaven." And this the emphasis in the original seems to require. "And have tasted of that heavenly gift."

Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου. "Et participes facti sunt Spiritus Sancti," Vulg. Lat.; "and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost." All others, "facti fuerint," "have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost." Syr., רוּחָא דקוּדְשָׁא, "the Spirit of holiness."

Καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα. Vulg. Lat., "et gustaverunt nihilominus bonum Dei verbum." Rhem., "have moreover tasted the good word of God." But "moreover" doth not express "nihilominus;" [it must be rendered] "and have notwithstanding," which hath no place here. Καλὸν ῥῆμα, "verbum pulchrum."

Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. "Virtutesque seculi futuri." Syr., חַיְלָא, "virtutem," "the power." Vulg., "seculi venturi." We cannot in our language distinguish between "futurum" and "venturum," and so render it, "the world to come."

Καὶ παραπεσόντας. Vulg., "et prolapsi sunt." Rhem., "and are fallen." Others, "si prolabantur;" which the sense requires,—"if they fall," that is, "away," as our translation, properly. Syr., דְּתוּב נֶחְטוּן, "that sin again;" somewhat dangerously, for it is one kind of sinning only that is included and expressed.

Πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν. Vulg., "rursus renovari ad pœnitentiam," "to be renewed again to repentance," rendering the active verb passively. So Beza also, "ut denuo renoventur ad resipiscentiam;" "that they should again be renewed to repentance." The word is active as rendered by ours, "to renew them again to repentance."

Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. "Rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei." Καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας. Vulg., "et ostentui habentes." Rhem., "and making him a mockery." Eras., "ludibrio habentes." Beza, "ignominiæ exponentes." One of late, "ad exemplum Judæorum excruciant;" "torment him as did the Jews."

Ver. 4–6.—For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away [for any] to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put him unto open shame [or treat him ignominiously].

That this passage in our apostle's discourse hath been looked upon as accompanied with great difficulties is known to all; and many have the differences been about its interpretation. For, both doctrinally and practically, sundry have here stumbled and miscarried. It is almost generally agreed upon,

that from these words, and the colourable but indeed perverse interpretation and application made of them by some in the primitive times, occasioned by the then present circumstances of things, to be mentioned afterwards, the Latin church was so backward in receiving the epistle itself, that it had not absolutely prevailed therein in the days of Jerome, as we have elsewhere declared. Wherefore it is necessary that we should a little inquire into the occasion of the great contests which have been in the church, almost in all ages, about the sense of this place.

It is known that the primitive church, according to its duty, was carefully watchful about the holiness and upright walking of all that were admitted into the society and fellowship of it. Hence, upon every known and visible failing, they required an open repentance from the offenders before they would admit them unto a participation of the sacred mysteries. But upon flagitious and scandalous crimes, such as murder, adultery, or idolatry, in many churches they would never admit those who had been guilty of them into their communion any more. Their greatest and most signal trial was with respect unto them who, through fear of death, complied with the Gentiles in their idolatrous worship in the time of persecution. For they had fixed no certain general rules whereby they should unanimously proceed, but every church exercised severity or lenity, according as they saw cause, upon the circumstances of particular instances. Hence Cyprian, in his banishment, would not positively determine concerning those of the church in Carthage who had so sinned and fallen, but deferred his thoughts until his return; when he resolved to advise with the whole church, and settle all things according to the counsel that should be agreed on amongst them. Yea, many of his epistles are on this subject peculiarly; and in them all, if compared together, it is evident that there was no rule agreed upon herein; nor was he himself resolved in his own mind, though strictly on all occasions opposing Novatianus; wherein it had been well if his arguments had answered his zeal. Before this, the church of Rome was esteemed in particular more remiss in their discipline, and more free than other churches in their re-admission unto communion of notorious offenders. Hence Tertullian, in his book de Pœnitentia, reflects on Zephyrinus, the bishop of Rome, that he had admitted adulterers unto repentance, and thereby unto the communion of the church. But that church proceeding in her lenity, and every day enlarging her charity, Novatus and Novatianus taking offence thereat, advanced an opinion on the contrary extreme. For they denied all hope of church pardon, or of a return unto ecclesiastical communion, unto them who had fallen into open sin after

baptism; and, in especial, peremptorily excluded all persons whatsoever who had outwardly complied with idolatrous worship in time of persecution, without respect unto any distinguishing circumstances. Yea, they seem to have excluded them from all expectation of forgiveness from God himself. But their followers, terrified with the uncharitableness and horror of this persuasion, tempered it so far as that, leaving all persons absolutely to the mercy of God upon their repentance, they only denied such as we mentioned before a re-admission into church communion, as Acesius speaks expressly in Socrates, lib. i. cap. vii. Now this opinion they endeavoured to confirm, as from the nature and use of baptism, which was not to be reiterated, whereon they judged that no pardon was to be granted unto them who fell into those sins which they lived in before, and were cleansed from at their baptism; so principally from this place of our apostle, wherein they thought their whole opinion was taught and confirmed. And so usually doth it fall out, very unhappily, with men who think they see some peculiar opinion or persuasion in some singular text of Scripture, and will not bring their interpretations of it unto the analogy of faith, whereby they might see how contrary it is to the whole design and current of the word in other places. But the church of Rome, on the other side, though judging rightly, from other directions given in the Scripture, that the Novatians transgressed the rule of charity and gospel discipline in their severities, yet, as it should seem, and is very probable, knew not how to answer the objection from this place of our apostle: therefore did they rather choose for a season to suspend their assent unto the authority of the whole epistle, than to prejudice the church by its admission. And well was it that some learned men afterward, by their sober interpretations of the words, plainly evinced that no countenance was given in them unto the errors of the Novatians; for without this it is much to be feared that some would have preferred their interest in their present controversy before the authority of it: which would, in the issue, have proved ruinous to the truth itself; for the epistle, being designed of God unto the common edification of the church, would at length have prevailed, whatever sense men, through their prejudices and ignorance, should put upon any passages of it. But this controversy is long since buried; the generality of the churches in the world being sufficiently remote from that which was truly the mistake of the Novatians, yea, the most of them do bear peaceably in their communion, without the least exercise of gospel discipline towards them, such persons as concerning whom the dispute was of old whether they should ever in this world

be admitted into the communion of the church, although upon their open and professed repentance. We shall not, therefore, at present need to labour in this controversy.

But the sense of these words hath been the subject of great contests on other occasions also. For some do suppose and contend that they are real and true believers who are deciphered by the apostle, and that their character is given us in and by sundry inseparable adjuncts and properties of such persons. Hence they conclude that such believers may totally and finally fall from grace, and perish eternally. Yea, it is evident that this hypothesis, of the final apostasy of true believers, is that which influenceth their minds and judgments to suppose that such are here intended. Wherefore others, who will not admit that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, true believers can perish everlastingly, do say, that either they are not here intended, or if they are, the words are only comminatory, wherein although the consequence in them in a way of arguing be true,—namely, that on the supposition laid down, the inference is certain,—yet the supposition is not asserted in order unto a certain consequent, whence it should follow that true believers might so really fall away and absolutely perish. And these things have been the matter of many contests among learned men.

Again; there have been sundry mistakes in the practical application of the intention of these words unto the consciences of men, mostly made by themselves who are concerned. For whereas, by reason of sin, they have been surprised with terrors and troubles of conscience, they have withal, in their darkness and distress, supposed themselves to be fallen into the condition here described by our apostle, and consequently to be irrecoverably lost. And these apprehensions usually befall men on two occasions. For some having been overtaken with some great actual sin against the second table, after they have made a profession of the gospel, and having their consciences harassed with a sense of their guilt (as it will fall out where men are not greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin), they judge that they are fallen under the sentence denounced in this scripture against such sinners as they suppose themselves to be, whereby their state is irrecoverable. Others do make the same judgment of themselves, because they have fallen from that constant compliance with their convictions which formerly led them unto a strict performance of duties, and this in some course of long continuance.

Now, whereas it is certain that the apostle in this discourse gives no countenance unto the severity of the Novatians, whereby they excluded offenders everlastingly from the peace and communion of the church; nor to the final apostasy of true believers, which he testifieth against in this very chapter, in compliance with innumerable other testimonies of Scripture to the same purpose; nor doth he teach any thing whereby the conscience of any sinner who desires to return to God, and to find acceptance with him, should be discouraged or disheartened; we must attend unto the exposition of the words in the first place, so as not to break in upon the boundaries of other truths, nor transgress against the analogy of faith. And we shall find that this whole discourse, compared with other scriptures, and freed from the prejudices that men have brought unto it, is both remote from administering any just occasion to the mistakes before-mentioned, and is a needful, wholesome commination, duly to be considered by all professors of the gospel.

In the words we consider,—1. The connection of them unto those foregoing, intimating the occasion of the introduction of this whole discourse. 2. The subject described in them, or the persons spoken of, under sundry qualifications, which may be inquired into jointly and severally. 3. What is supposed concerning them. 4. What is affirmed of them on that supposition.

Γαρ. FIRST, The connection of the words is included in the causal conjunction, γάρ, "for." It respects the introduction of a reason for what had been before discoursed, as also of the limitation which the apostle added expressly unto his purpose of making a progress in their further instruction, "If God permit." And he doth not herein express his judgment that they to whom he wrote were such as he describes, for he afterwards declares that he "hoped better things concerning them;" only it was necessary to give them this caution, that they might take due care not to be such. And whereas he had manifested that they were slow as to the making of a progress in knowledge and a suitable practice, he lets them here know the danger that there was in continuing in that slothful condition. For not to proceed in the ways of the gospel, and obedience thereunto, is an untoward entrance into a total relinquishment of the one and the other. That therefore they might be acquainted with the danger hereof, and be stirred up to avoid that danger, he gives them an account of those who, after a profession of the gospel, beginning at a non-proficiency under it, do end in apostasy from it. And we may see, that the severest comminations are not only useful in the preaching of the gospel, but exceeding necessary towards persons that are observed to be slothful in their profession.

SECONDLY, The description of the persons that are the subject spoken of is given in five instances of the evangelical privileges whereof they were made partakers; notwithstanding all which, and against their obliging efficacy to the contrary, it is supposed that they may wholly desert the gospel itself. And some things we may observe concerning this description of them in general; as,—1. The apostle, designing to express the fearful state and judgment of these persons, describes them by such things as may fully evidence it to be, as unavoidable, so righteous and equal. Those things must be some evident privileges and advantages, whereof they were made partakers by the gospel. These being despised in their apostasy, do proclaim their destruction from God to be rightly deserved. 2. That all these privileges do consist in certain especial operations of the Holy Ghost, which were peculiar unto the dispensation of the gospel, such as they neither were nor could be made partakers of in their Judaism. For "the Spirit," in this sense, was not "received by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith," Gal. 3:2; and this was a testimony unto them that they were delivered from the bondage of the law, namely, by a participation of that Spirit which was the great privilege of the gospel. 3. Here is no express mention of any covenant grace or mercy in them or towards them, nor of any duty of faith or obedience which they had performed. Nothing of justification, sanctification, or adoption, is expressly assigned unto them. Afterwards, when he comes to declare his hope and persuasion concerning these Hebrews, that they were not such as those whom he had before described, nor such as would so fall away unto perdition, he doth it upon three grounds, whereon they were differenced from them: as,—(1.) That they had such things as did "accompany salvation;" that is, such as salvation is inseparable from. None of these things, therefore, had he ascribed unto those whom he describeth in this place; for if he had so done, they would not have been unto him an argument and evidence of a contrary end, that these should not fall away and perish as well as those. Wherefore he ascribes nothing to these here in the text that doth peculiarly "accompany salvation," verse 9. (2.) He describes them by their duties of obedience and fruits of faith. This was their "work and labour of love" towards the name of God, verse 10. And hereby, also, doth he difference them from these in the text, concerning whom he supposeth that they may perish eternally, which these fruits of saving faith and sincere love cannot do. (3.) He adds, that in the preservation of those there mentioned the faithfulness of God was concerned: "God is not unrighteous to forget." For they were such he intended as were interested in the covenant of grace, with respect whereunto

alone there is any engagement on the faithfulness or righteousness of God to preserve men from apostasy and ruin; and there is so with an equal respect unto all who are so taken into the covenant. But of these in the text he supposeth no such thing; and thereupon doth not intimate that either the righteousness or faithfulness of God was any way engaged for their preservation, but rather the contrary. The whole description, therefore, refers unto some especial gospel privileges, which professors in those days were promiscuously made partakers of; and what they were in particular we must in the next place inquire:—

Ἅπαξ φωτισθέντες. 1. The first thing in the description is, that they were ἅπαξ φωτισθέντες, "once enlightened;" saith the Syriac translation, as we observed, "once baptized." It is very certain that, early in the church, baptism was called φωτισμός, "illumination;" and φωτίζειν, "to enlighten," was used for "to baptize." And the set times wherein they solemnly administered that ordinance were called ἡμέραι τῶν φωτῶν, "the days of light." Hereunto the Syriac interpreter seems to have had respect. And the word ἅπαξ, "once," may give countenance hereunto. Baptism was once only to be celebrated, according to the constant faith of the churches in all ages. And they called baptism "illumination," because it being one ordinance of the initiation of persons into a participation of all the mysteries of the church, they were thereby translated out of the kingdom of darkness into that of grace and light. And it seems to give further countenance hereunto, in that baptism really was the beginning and foundation of a participation of all the other spiritual privileges that are mentioned afterwards. For it was usual in those times, that upon the baptizing of persons, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts, peculiar to the days of the gospel, as we have showed in our consideration of the order between "baptism" and "imposition of hands." And this opinion hath so much of probability in it, having nothing therewithal unsuited to the analogy of faith or design of the place, that I should embrace it, if the word itself, as here used, did not require another interpretation. For it was a good while after the writing of this epistle, and all other parts of the New Testament, at least an age or two, if not more, before this word was used mystically to express baptism. In the whole Scripture it hath another sense, denoting an inward operation of the Spirit, and not the outward administration of an ordinance. And it is too much boldness, to take a word in a peculiar sense in one single place, diverse from its proper signification and constant use, if there be no circumstances in the text forcing us thereunto, as here are not. And

for the word ἅπαξ, "once," it is not to be restrained unto this particular, but refers equally unto all the instances that follow, signifying no more but that those mentioned were really and truly partakers of them.

Φωτίζομαι is "to give light or knowledge by teaching;"—the same with הוֹרָה, which, therefore, is so translated ofttimes by the Greeks; as by Aquila, Exod. 4:12; Ps. 119:33; Prov. 4:4; Isa. 27:11, as Drusius observes. And it is so by the LXX., Judges 13:8; 2 Kings 12:2, 17:27. Our apostle useth it for "to make manifest;" that is, "bring to light," 1 Cor. 4:5, 2 Tim. 1:10. And the meaning of it, John 1:9, where we render it "lighteth," is to teach. And φωτισμός is "knowledge upon instruction:" 2 Cor. 4:4, Εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι αὐτοῖς τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, —"That the light of the gospel should not shine into them;" that is, the knowledge of it. So verse 6, Πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως,—"The light of the knowledge." Wherefore to be "enlightened," in this place, is to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a spiritual apprehension thereof. And this is so termed on a double account:—

(1.) Of the object, or the things known and apprehended. For "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel," 2 Tim. 1:10. Hence it is called "light;" "the inheritance of the saints in light." And the state which men are thereby brought into is so called in opposition to the darkness that is in the world without it, 1 Pet. 2:9. The world without the gospel is the kingdom of Satan: Ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τ�ῶ πονηρῶ κεῖται, 1 John 5:19. The whole of the world, and all that belongs unto it, in distinction and opposition unto the new creation, is under the power of the wicked one, the prince of the power of darkness, and so is full of darkness. It is τόπος αὐχαηρός, 2 Pet. 1:19;—"a dark place," wherein ignorance, folly, error, and superstition do dwell and reign. By the power and efficacy of this darkness are men kept at a distance from God, and know not whither they go. This is called "walking in darkness," 1 John 1:6; whereunto "walking in the light," that is, the knowledge of God in Christ by the gospel, is opposed, verse 7. On this account is our instruction in the knowledge of the gospel called "illumination," because itself is light.

(2.) On the account of the subject, or the mind itself, whereby the gospel is apprehended. For the knowledge which is received thereby expels that darkness, ignorance, and confusion, which the mind before was filled and possessed withal. The knowledge, I say, of the doctrine of the gospel, concerning the person of Christ, of God's being in him reconciling the world unto himself, of his offices, work, and mediation, and the like heads of divine revelation, doth set up a spiritual light in the minds of men, enabling them to discern what

before was utterly hid from them, whilst "alienated from the life of God through their ignorance." Of this light and knowledge there are several degrees, according to the means of instruction which they do enjoy, the capacity they have to receive it, and the diligence they use to that purpose. But a competent measure of the knowledge of the fundamental and most material principles or doctrines of the gospel is required unto all that may thence be said to be illuminated; that is, freed from the darkness and ignorance they once lived in, 2 Pet. 1:19–21.

This is the first property whereby the persons intended are described; they are such as were "illuminated" by the instruction they had received in the doctrine of the gospel, and the impression made thereby on their minds by the Holy Ghost; for this is a common work of his, and is here so reckoned. And the apostle would have us know that,—

Obs. I. It is a great mercy, a great privilege, to be enlightened with the doctrine of the gospel, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost. But,—

Obs. II. It is such a privilege as may be lost, and end in the aggravation of the sin, and condemnation of those who were made partakers of it. And,—

Obs. III. Where there is a total neglect of the due improvement of this privilege and mercy, the condition of such persons is hazardous, as inclining towards apostasy.

Thus much lies open and manifest in the text. But that we may more particularly discover the nature of this first part of the character of apostates, for their sakes who may look after their own concernment therein, we may yet a little more distinctly express the nature of that illumination and knowledge which is ascribed unto them; and how it is lost in apostasy will afterwards appear. And,—

(1.) There is a knowledge of spiritual things that is purely natural and disciplinary, attainable and attained without any especial aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost. As this is evident in common experience, so especially among such as, casting themselves on the study of spiritual things, are yet utter strangers unto all spiritual gifts. Some knowledge of the Scripture, and the things contained in it, is attainable at the same rate of pains and study with that of any other art or science.

(2.) The illumination intended, being a gift of the Holy Ghost, differs from, and is exalted above this knowledge that is purely natural; for it makes nearer approaches unto the light of spiritual things in their own nature than the other

doth. Notwithstanding the utmost improvement of scientifical notions that are purely natural, the things of the gospel, in their own nature, are not only unsuited to the wills and affections of persons endued with them, but are really foolishness unto their minds. And as unto that goodness and excellency which give desirableness unto spiritual things, this knowledge discovers so little of them, that most men hate the things which they profess to believe. But this spiritual illumination gives the mind some satisfaction, with delight and joy, in the things that are known. By that beam whereby it shines into darkness, although it be not fully comprehended, yet it represents the way of the gospel as a way of righteousness, 2 Pet. 2:21, which reflects a peculiar regard of it on the mind.

Moreover, the knowledge that is merely natural hath little or no power upon the soul, either to keep it from sin or to constrain it unto obedience. There is not a more secure and profligate generation of sinners in the world than those who are under the sole conduct of it. But the illumination here intended is attended with efficacy, and doth effectually press in the conscience and whole soul unto an abstinence from sin, and the performance of all known duties. Hence persons under the power of it and its convictions do ofttimes walk blamelessly and uprightly in the world, so as not with the other to contribute unto the contempt of Christianity. Besides, there is such an alliance between spiritual gifts, that where any one of them doth reside, it hath assuredly others accompanying of it, or one way or other belonging unto its train, as is manifest in this place. Even a single talent is made up of many pounds. But the light and knowledge which is of a mere natural acquirement is solitary, destitute of the society and countenance of any spiritual gift whatever. And these things are exemplified unto common observation every day.

(3.) There is a saving, sanctifying light and knowledge, which this spiritual illumination riseth not up unto; for though it transiently affects the mind with some glances of the beauty, glory, and excellency of spiritual things, yet it doth not give that direct, steady, intuitive insight into them which is obtained by grace. See 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:4, 6. Neither doth it renew, change, or transform the soul into a conformity unto the things known, by planting of them in the will and affections, as a gracious saving light doth, 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 6:17, 12:2.

These things I judged necessary to be added, to clear the nature of the first character of apostates.

Τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. 2. The second thing asserted in the description of them is, that they have "tasted of the heavenly gift,"—γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. The doubling of the article gives emphasis to the expression. And we must inquire, (1.) What is meant by the "heavenly gift;" and, (2.) What by "tasting of it."

(1.) The "gift of God," δωρεά, is either δόσις, "donatio," or δώρημα, "donum." Sometimes it is taken for the grant or giving itself, and sometimes for the thing given. In the first sense it is used, 2 Cor. 9:15, "Thanks be to God, ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ,"—"for his gift that cannot be declared;" that is, fully or sufficiently. Now this gift was his grant of a free, charitable, and bountiful spirit to the Corinthians, in ministering unto the poor saints. The grant hereof is called God's gift. So is the gift of Christ used also, Eph. 4:7, "According to the measure of the gift of Christ;" that is, according as he is pleased to give and grant of the fruits of the Spirit unto men. See Rom. 5:15–17; Eph. 3:7. Sometimes it is taken for the thing given, properly δῶρον or δώρημα, as James 1:17. So it is used, John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ:"—"the gift of God;" that is, the thing given by him, or to be given by him. It is, as many judge, the person of Christ himself in that place which is intended. But the context makes it plain that it is the Holy Ghost; for he is the "living water" which the Lord Jesus promiseth in that place to bestow. And so far as I can observe, δωρεά, "the gift," with respect unto God, as denoting the thing given, is nowhere used but only to signify the Holy Ghost. And if it be so, the sense of this place is determined, Acts 2:38, "Ye shall receive τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος,"—"the gift of the Holy Ghost;" not that which he gives, but that which he is. Chap, 8:20, "Thou hast thought δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ,"—"that the gift of God may be purchased with money;" that is, the power of the Holy Ghost in miraculous operations. So expressly, chap. 10:45, 11:17. Elsewhere δωρεά, so far as I can observe, when respecting God, doth not signify the thing given, but the grant itself. The Holy Spirit is signally "the gift of God" under the new testament.

Τῆς ἐπουρανίου. And he is said to be ἐπουράνιος, "heavenly," or from heaven. This may have respect unto his work and effect,—they are heavenly as opposed to carnal and earthly. But principally it regards his mission by Christ after his ascension into heaven, Acts 2:33. Being exalted, and having received the promise of the Father, he sent the Spirit. The promise of him was, that he should be sent "from heaven," or "from above;" as God is said to be "above," which is the same with "heavenly," Deut. 4:39; 2 Chron. 6:23; Job 31:28; Isa. 32:15, 24:18. When he

came upon the Lord Christ, to anoint him for his work, "the heavens were opened," and he came from above, Matt 3:16. So, Acts 2:2, at his first coming on the apostles, "there came a sound from heaven." Hence he is said to be ἀποσταλεὶς ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ,—that is, to be ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ ἐπουράνιος, "sent from heaven," 1 Pet. 1:12. Wherefore, although he may be said to be heavenly upon other accounts also, which therefore are not absolutely to be excluded, yet his being sent from heaven by Christ, after his ascension thither, and exaltation there, is principally here regarded. He, therefore, is this ἡ δωρεὰ ἡ ἐπουράνιος, the "heavenly gift" here intended, though not absolutely, but with respect to an especial work.

That which riseth up against this interpretation is, that the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned in the next clause, "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." It is not therefore probable that he should be here also intended.

Ans. [1.] It is ordinary to have the same thing twice expressed in various words, to quicken the sense of them; and it is necessary it should be so when there are divers respects unto the same thing, as there are in this place.

[2.] The following clause may be exegetical of this, declaring more fully and plainly what is here intended, which is usual also in the Scriptures; so that nothing is cogent from this consideration to disprove an interpretation so suited to the sense of the place, and which the constant use of the word makes necessary to be embraced. But,—

[3.] The Holy Ghost is here mentioned as the great gift of the gospel times, as coming down from heaven, not absolutely, not as unto his person, but with respect unto an especial work, namely, the change of the whole state of religious worship in the church of God; whereas we shall see in the next words he is spoken of only with respect unto external, actual operations. But he was the great, the promised heavenly gift, to be bestowed under the new testament, by whom God would institute and ordain a new way, and new rites of worship, upon the revelation of himself and will in Christ. Unto him was committed the reformation of all things in the church, whose time was now come, chap. 9:10. The Lord Christ, when he ascended into heaven, left all things standing and continuing in religious worship as they had done from the days of Moses, though he had virtually put an end unto it [the Mosaical dispensation.] And he commanded his disciples that they should attempt no alteration therein until the Holy Ghost were sent from heaven to enable them thereunto, Acts 1:4, 5. But when he came, as the great gift of God promised under the new testament,

he removes all the carnal worship and ordinances of Moses, and that by the full revelation of the accomplishment of all that was signified by them, and appoints the new, holy, spiritual worship of the gospel, that was to succeed in their room. The Spirit of God, therefore, as bestowed for the introduction of the new gospel-state, in truth and worship, is "the heavenly gift" here intended. Thus our apostle warneth these Hebrews that they "turn not away from him who speaketh from heaven," chap. 12:25; that is, Jesus Christ speaking in the dispensation of the gospel by "the Holy Ghost sent from heaven." And there is an antithesis included herein between the law and the gospel; the former being given on earth, the latter being immediately from heaven. God in the giving of the law made use of the ministry of angels, and that on the earth; but he gave the gospel church-state by that Spirit which, although he worketh in men on the earth, and is said in every act or work to be sent from heaven, yet is still in heaven, and always speaketh from thence, as our Saviour said of himself, with respect unto his divine nature, John 3:13.

Γευσαμένους τε. (2.) We may inquire what it is to "taste" of this heavenly gift. The expression of tasting is metaphorical, and signifies no more but to make a trial or experiment; for so we do by tasting, naturally and properly, of that which is tendered unto us to eat. We taste such things by the sense given us naturally to discern our food; and then either receive or refuse them, as we find occasion. It doth not, therefore, include eating, much less digestion and turning into nourishment of what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savour, upon some other consideration. Some have observed, that to taste is as much as to eat; as 2 Sam. 3:35, "I will not taste bread, or ought else." But the meaning is, 'I will not so much as taste it;' whence it was impossible he should eat it. And when Jonathan says he only tasted a little of the honey, 1 Sam. 14:29, it was an excuse and extenuation of what he had done. But it is unquestionably used for some kind of experience of the nature of things: Prov. 31:18, "She tasteth that her merchandise is good;" or hath experience of it, from its increase. Ps. 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good:" which Peter respects, 1 Epist. 2:3, "If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," or found it so by experience. It is therefore properly to make an experiment or trial of any thing, whether it be received or refused; and is sometimes opposed to eating and digestion, as Matt. 27:34. That, therefore, which is ascribed unto these persons, is, that they had an experience of the power of the Holy Ghost, that gift of God, in the dispensation of the gospel, the revelation of the truth, and institution of the spiritual

worship of it; of this state, and of the excellency of it, they had made some trial, and had some experience;—a privilege which all men were not made partakers of. And by this taste they were convinced that it was far more excellent than what they had been before accustomed unto; although now they had a mind to leave the finest wheat for their old acorns. Wherefore, although tasting contains a diminution in it, if compared with that spiritual eating and drinking, with that digestion of gospel truths, turning them into nourishment, which are in true believers; yet, absolutely considered, it denotes that apprehension and experience of the excellency of the gospel as administered by the Spirit, which is a great privilege and spiritual advantage, the contempt whereof will prove an unspeakable aggravation of the sin, and the remediless ruin of apostates.

The meaning, then, of this character given concerning these apostates is, that they had some experience of the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit from heaven, in gospel administrations and worship. For what some say of faith, it hath here no place; and what others affirm of Christ, and his being the gift of God, comes in the issue unto what we have proposed. And we may observe, further to clear the design of the apostle in this commination, that,—

Obs. I. All the gifts of God under the gospel are peculiarly heavenly, John 3:12, Eph. 1:3; and that in opposition,—(1.) To earthly things, Col. 3:1, 2; (2.) To carnal ordinances, Heb. 9:23. Let them beware by whom they are despised.

Obs. II. The Holy Ghost, for the revelation of the mysteries of the gospel, and the institution of the ordinances of spiritual worship, is the great "gift of God" under the new testament.

Obs. III. There is a goodness and excellency in this heavenly gift, which may be tasted or experienced in some measure by such as never receive them, in their life, power, and efficacy. They may taste,—(1.) Of the word in its truth, not its power; (2.) Of the worship of the church in its outward order, not its inward beauty; (3.) Of the gifts of the church, not its graces.

Obs. IV. A rejection of the gospel, its truth and worship, after some experience had of their worth and excellency, is a high aggravation of sin, and a certain presage of destruction.

Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου. 3. The third property whereby these persons are described is added in these words, Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου,—"And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This is placed in the middle or centre of the privileges enumerated, two preceding it, and two

following after, as that which is the root and animating principle of them all. They all are effects of the Holy Ghost, in his gifts or his graces, and so do depend on the participation of him. Now men do so partake of the Holy Ghost as they do receive him. And he may be received either as unto personal inhabitation or as unto spiritual operations. In the first way "the world cannot receive him," John 14:17; where "the world" is opposed unto true believers, and therefore those here intended were not in that sense partakers of him. His operations respect his gifts. So to partake of him is to have a share, part, or portion, in what he distributes by way of spiritual gifts; in answer unto that expression, "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will," 1 Cor. 12:11. So Peter told Simon the magician, that he had no part in spiritual gifts, he was not partaker of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8:21. Wherefore to be "partaker of the Holy Ghost," is to have a share in and benefit of his spiritual operations.

But whereas the other things mentioned are also gifts or operations of the Holy Ghost, on what ground or for what reason is this mentioned here in particular, that they were made partakers of him, which if his operations only be intended, seems to be expressed in the other instances?

Ans. (1.) It is, as we observed before, no unusual thing in the Scripture to express the same thing under various notions, the more effectually to impress a consideration and sense of it on our mind, especially where an expression hath a singular emphasis in it, as this hath here used; for it is an exceeding aggravation of the sins of those apostates, that in these things they were partakers of the Holy Ghost.

(2.) As was before intimated, also, this participation of the Holy Ghost is placed, it may be, in the midst of the several parts of this description, as that whereon they do all depend, and they are all but instances of it. They were "partakers of the Holy Ghost," in that they were "once enlightened;" and so of the rest.

(3.) It expresseth their own personal interest in these things. They had an interest in the things mentioned not only objectively, as they were proposed and presented to them in the church, but subjectively,—they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of them. It is one thing for a man to have a share in and benefit by the gifts of the church, another to be personally himself endowed with them.

(4.) To mind them in an especial manner of the privileges they enjoyed under the gospel, above what they had in their Judaism; for whereas then they had not so much as heard that there was a Holy Ghost,—that is, a blessed dispensation of him in spiritual gifts, Acts 19:2,—now they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of him; than which there could be no greater aggravation of their apostasy. And we may observe in our way, that,—

Obs. The Holy Ghost is present with many as unto powerful operations, with whom he is not present as to gracious inhabitation; or, many are made partakers of him in his spiritual gifts who are never made partakers of him in his saving graces, Matt. 7:22, 23.

Καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα. 4. It is added, fourthly, in the description, that they had "tasted καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα,"—"the good word of God." And we must inquire,—(1.) What is meant by "the word of God;" (2.) How it is said to be "good;" and, (3.) In what sense they "tasted" of it.

(1.) Ῥῆμα is properly "verbum dictum," "a word spoken;" and although it be sometimes used in another sense by our apostle, and by him alone,—Heb. 1:3, 11:3, where it denotes the effectual active power of God,—yet both the signification of the word and its principal use elsewhere denote words spoken; and when applied unto God, his word as preached and declared. See Rom. 10:17, John 6:68. The word of God, that is, the word of the gospel as preached, is that which they thus tasted of. But it may be said, that they enjoyed the word of God in their state of Judaism. They did so, as to the written word; for "unto them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. 3:2; but it is the word of God as preached in the dispensation of the gospel that is eminently thus called, and concerning which such excellent things are spoken, Rom. 1:16; Acts 20:32; James 1:21.

(2.) The word is said to be καλόν, "good," desirable, amiable, as the word here used signifieth. Wherein it is so we shall see immediately. But whereas the word of God preached under the dispensation of the gospel may be considered two ways:—[1.] In general, as to the whole system of truths contained therein; and [2.] In especial, for the declaration made of the accomplishment of the promise in sending Jesus Christ for the redemption of the church,—it is here especially intended in this latter sense. This is emphatically called ῥῆμα Κυρίου, 1 Pet. 1:25. So the promise of God in particular is called his "good word:" Jer. 29:10, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good

word toward you;" as he calls it "the good thing which he had promised," chap. 33:14. The gospel is the "good tidings of peace and salvation" by Jesus Christ, Isa. 52:7.

(3.) Hereof they are said to "taste," as they were before of the heavenly gift. The apostle as it were studiously keeps himself to this expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ, as tendered in the word of the gospel, John 6:35, 49–51, 54–56. It is as if he had said, 'I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual food of their souls, and turned it into spiritual nourishment; but of such as have so far tasted of it, as that they ought to have desired it as "sincere milk, to have grown thereby." ' But they had received such an experiment of its divine truth and power, as that it had various effects upon them. And for the further explication of these words, and therein of the description of the state of these supposed apostates, we may consider the ensuing observations, which declare the sense of the words, or what is contained in them:—

Obs. I. There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God, able to attract and affect the minds of men, who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it.

Obs. II. There is an especial goodness in the word of the promise concerning Jesus Christ, and the declaration of its accomplishment.

Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. 5. Lastly, It is added, Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος,—"And the powers of the world to come." Δυνάμεις are גְּבוּרוֹת, or נִפְלָאוֹת; the mighty, great, miraculous operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were, and how they were wrought among these Hebrews, hath been declared in our exposition on chap. 2:4, whither I shall refer the reader; and they are known from the Acts of the Apostles, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that chapter, that by "the world to come," our apostle in this epistle intends the days of the Messiah, that being the usual name of it in the church at that time, as the new world which God had promised to create. Wherefore these "powers of the world to come," were the gifts whereby those signs, wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, according as it was foretold by the prophets that they should be so. See Joel 2. compared with Acts 2. These the persons spoken of are supposed to have "tasted;" for the particle τε refers to γευσαμένους foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had an experience of the glorious and powerful working of the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the gospel. Yea, I do judge that themselves in their own

persons were partakers of these powers, in the gifts of tongues and other miraculous operations; which was the highest aggravation possible of their apostasy, and that which peculiarly rendered their recovery impossible. For there is not in the Scripture an impossibility put upon the recovery of any but such as peculiarly sin against the Holy Ghost: and although that guilt may be otherwise contracted, yet in none so signally as this, of rejecting that truth which was confirmed by his mighty operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an ascription of his divine power unto the devil. Yet would I not fix on those extraordinary gifts exclusively unto those that are ordinary. They also are of the powers of the world to come. So is every thing that belongs to the erection or preservation of the new world or the kingdom of Christ. To the first setting up of a kingdom, great and mighty power is required; but being set up, the ordinary dispensation of power will preserve it. So is it in this matter. The extraordinary, miraculous gifts of the Spirit were used in the erection of Christ's kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary gifts; which, therefore, also belong unto the powers of the world to come.

THIRDLY, From the consideration of this description, in all the parts of it, we may understand what sort of persons it is that is intended here by the apostle. And it appears, yea is evident,—

1. That the persons here intended are not true and sincere believers, in the strict and proper sense of that name, at least they are not described here as such; so that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are so, as to the possibility of their total and final apostasy. For, (1.) There is in their full and large description no mention of faith, or believing, either expressly or in terms equivalent; and in no other place in the Scripture are such intended, but they are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. And, (2.) There is not any thing ascribed to these persons that is peculiar to them as such, or discriminative of them, as taken either from their especial relation unto God in Christ, or any such property of their own as is not communicable unto others. For instance, they are not said to be called according to God's purpose; to be born again, not of man, nor of the will of flesh, but of God; nor to be justified, or sanctified, or united unto Christ, or to be the sons of God by adoption; nor have they any other characteristical note of true believers ascribed to them. (3.) They are in the following verses compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briers. But this is not so with true believers. For faith itself is an herb peculiar to the enclosed garden of Christ, and meet for him by whom we are dressed. (4.) The apostle afterwards

discoursing of true believers, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as may be apostates; which is supposed of the persons here intended, as was before declared. For, [1.] He ascribeth unto them in general "better things, and such as accompany salvation," verse 9. [2.] He ascribes a "work and labour of love," as it is true faith alone which worketh by love, verse 10; whereof he speaks not one word concerning these. [3.] He asserts their preservation;—1st, On the account of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, verse 10; 2dly, Of the immutability of his counsel concerning them, verse 17, 18. In all these and sundry other instances doth he put a difference between these apostates and true believers. And whereas the apostle intends to declare the aggravation of their sin in falling away by the principal privileges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word, in name or thing, of those which he expressly assigns to be the chief privileges of true believers, Rom. 8:27–30.

2. Our next inquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend. And, (1.) They were such who not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity, upon the evidence of the truth of its doctrine, and the miraculous operations wherewith its dispensation was accompanied. (2.) He intends not the common sort of them, but such as had obtained especial privileges among them. For they had received extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as speaking with tongues or working miracles. And, (3.) They had found in themselves and others convincing evidences that the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which they called "the world to come," was come unto them; and had satisfaction in the glories of it. (4.) Such persons as these, as they have a work of light on their minds, so, according to the efficacy of their convictions, they may have such a change wrought upon their affections and in their conversation, as that they may be of great esteem among professors; and such those here intended might be. Now it must needs be some horrible frame of spirit, some malicious enmity against the truth and holiness of Christ and the gospel, some violent love of sin and the world, that could turn off such persons as these from the faith, and blot out all that light and conviction of truth which they had received. But the least grace is a better security for heaven than the greatest gifts and privileges whatever.

Καὶ παραπεσόντας. These are the persons concerning whom our apostle discourseth, and of whom it is supposed by him that they may "fall away,"—καὶ παραπεσόντας. The especial nature of the sin here intended is afterwards declared in two instances or aggravating circumstances. This word expresseth the respect it had to the state and condition of the sinners themselves; they fall

away, do that whereby they do so. I think we have well expressed the word, "If they shall fall away." Our old translations render it only, "If they shall fall:" which expressed not the sense of the word, and was liable to a sense not at all intended; for he doth not say, "If they shall fall into sin,"—this, or that, or any sin whatever that can be named, suppose the greatest sin imaginable, namely, the denial of Christ in the time of danger or persecution. This was that sin (as we intimated before) about which so many contests were raised of old, and so many canons were multiplied about the ordering of them who had contracted the guilt thereof. But one example well considered had been a better guide for them than all their own arbitrary rules and imaginations,—when Peter fell into this sin, and yet was "renewed again to repentance," and that speedily. Wherefore we may lay down this in the first place, as to the sense of the words: There is no particular sin that any man may fall into occasionally, through the power of temptation, that can cast the sinner under this commination, so that it should be impossible to renew him to repentance. It must, therefore, secondly, be a course of sin or sinning that is intended. But there are various degrees herein also, yea, there are divers kinds of such courses in sin. A man may so fall into a way of sin as still to retain in his mind such a principle of light and conviction that may be suitable to his recovery. To exclude such from all hopes of repentance is expressly contrary to Ezek. 18:21, Isa. 55:7, yea, and the whole sense of the Scripture. Wherefore men, after some conviction and reformation of life, may fall into corrupt and wicked courses, and make a long abode or continuance in them. Examples hereof we have every day amongst us, although it may be none to parallel that of Manasseh. Consider the nature of his education under his father Hezekiah, the greatness of his sins, the length of his continuance in them, with his following recovery, and he is a great instance in this case. Whilst there is in such persons any seed of light or conviction of truth which is capable of an excitation or revival, so as to put forth its power and efficacy in their souls, they cannot be looked on to be in the condition intended, though their case be dangerous.

3. Our apostle makes a distinction between πταίω and πίπτω, Rom. 11:11,—between "stumbling" and "falling;" and would not allow that the unbelieving Jews of those days were come so far as πίπτειν,—that is, to fall absolutely: Λέγω οὖν· Μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσι; μὴ γένοιτο,—"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid;" that is, absolutely and irrecoverably. So, therefore,

doth that word signify in this place. And παραπίπτω increaseth the signification, either as to perverseness in the manner of the fall, or as to violence in the fall itself.

From what hath been discoursed, it will appear what falling away it is that the apostle here intendeth. And,—

(1.) It is not a falling into this or that actual sin, be it of what nature it will; which may be, and yet not be a falling away.

(2.) It is not a falling upon temptation or surprisal; for concerning such fallings we have rules of another kind given us in sundry places, and those exemplified in especial instances: but it is that which is premeditated, of deliberation and choice.

(3.) It is not a falling by a relinquishment or renunciation of some, though very material principles of Christian religion, by error or seduction; as the Corinthians fell, in denying the resurrection of the dead; and the Galatians, by denying justification by faith in Christ alone. Wherefore,—

(4.) It must consist in a total renunciation of all the constituent principles and doctrines of Christianity, whence it is denominated. Such was the sin of them who relinquished the gospel to return unto Judaism, as it was then stated, in opposition unto it, and hatred of it. This it was, and not any kind of actual sins, that the apostle manifestly discourseth concerning.

(5.) For the completing of this falling away according to the intention of the apostle, it is required that this renunciation be avowed and professed; as when a man forsaketh the profession of the gospel and falls into Judaism, or Mohammedanism, or Gentilism, in persuasion and practice. For the apostle discourseth concerning faith and obedience as professed; and so, therefore, also of their contraries. And this avowment of a relinquishment of the gospel hath many provoking aggravations attending it. And yet whereas some men may in their hearts and minds utterly renounce the gospel, but, upon some outward, secular considerations, either dare not or will not profess that inward renunciation, their falling away is complete and total in the sight of God; and all they do to cover their apostasy in an external compliance with Christian religion, is in the sight of God but a mocking of him, and the highest aggravation of their sin.

This is the falling away intended by the apostle:—a voluntary, resolved relinquishment of and apostasy from the gospel, the faith, rule, and obedience thereof; which cannot be without casting the highest reproach and contumely imaginable upon the person of Christ himself, as is afterwards expressed.

FOURTHLY, Concerning these persons, and their thus falling away, two things are to be considered in the text: 1. What is affirmed of them. 2. The reason of that affirmation.

1. The first is, That "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." The thing intended is negative;—to "renew them again to repentance," this is denied of them. But the modification of that negation turns the proposition into an affirmation: "It is impossible so to do."

Ἀδύνατον γάρ. Ἀδύνατον γάρ. The importance of this word is dubious; some think an absolute, and others a moral impossibility is intended thereby. This latter most fix upon; so that it is a matter rare, difficult, and seldom to be expected, that is intended, and not that which is absolutely impossible. Considerable reasons and instances are produced for either interpretation. But we must look further into the meaning of it.

All future events depend on God, who alone doth necessarily exist. Other things may be, or may not be, as they respect him or his will. And so things that are future may be said to be impossible, or be so, either with respect unto the nature of God, or his decrees, or his moral rule, order, and law. (1.) Things are impossible with respect unto the nature of God, either absolutely, as being inconsistent with his being and essential properties: so it is impossible that God should lie: or, on some supposition, so it is impossible that God should forgive sin without satisfaction, on the supposition of his law and the sanction of it. In this sense the repentance of these apostates, it may be, is not impossible. I say, it may be; it may be there is nothing in it contrary to any essential properties of the nature of God, either directly or reductively. But I will not be positive herein. For the things ascribed unto these apostates are such,—namely, their "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame,"—as that I know not but that it may be contrary to the holiness, and righteousness, and glory of God, as the supreme ruler of the world, to have any more mercy on them than on the devils themselves, or those that are in hell. But I will not assert this to be the meaning of the place.

(2.) Again; things possible in themselves, and with respect unto the nature of God, are rendered impossible by God's decree and purpose: he hath absolutely determined that they shall never be. So it was impossible that Saul and his posterity should be preserved in the kingdom of Israel. It was not contrary to the nature of God, but God had decreed that so it should not be, 1 Sam. 15:28, 29. But, the decrees of God respecting persons in particular, and not qualifications in the first place, they cannot be here intended; because they are free acts of his will, not revealed, neither in particular nor by virtue of any general rule, as they are sovereign, making differences between persons in the same condition, Rom. 9:11, 12. What is possible or impossible with respect unto the nature of God, we may know in some good measure from the certain knowledge we may have of his being and essential properties; but what is so one way or other with respect unto his decrees or purposes, which are sovereign, free acts of his will, knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, Isa. 40:13, 14; Rom. 11:34.

(3.) Things are possible or impossible with respect unto the rule and order of all things that God hath appointed. When in things of duty God hath neither expressly commanded them, nor appointed means for the performance of them, then are we to look upon them as impossible; and then, with respect unto us, they are so absolutely, and so to be esteemed. And this is the impossibility here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavour, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promised to assist us in it. It is therefore that which we have no reason to look after, attempt, or expect, as being not possible by any law, rule, or constitution of God.

The apostle instructs us no further in the nature of future events but as our own duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look, or hope, or pray for, or endeavour the renewal of such persons unto repentance. God gives law unto us in these things, not unto himself. It may be possible with God, for aught we know, if there be not a contradiction in it unto any of the holy properties of his nature; only he will not have us to expect any such thing from him, nor hath he appointed any means for us to endeavour it. What he shall do we ought thankfully to accept; but our own duty towards such persons is absolutely at an end. And, indeed, they put themselves wholly out of our reach.

Εἰς μετάνοιαν. That which is said to be thus impossible with respect unto these persons is, παλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν,—"to renew them again to repentance," Μετάνοια in the New Testament with respect unto God, signifies "a gracious change of mind," on gospel principles and promises, leading the whole soul into conversion unto God.

This is the beginning and entrance of our turning unto God, without which neither the will nor the affections will be engaged unto him, nor is it possible for sinners to find acceptance with him.

Ἀνακαινίζειν. "It is impossible ἀνακαινίζειν," "to renew." The construction of the word is detective, and must be supplied. Σέ may be added, "to renew themselves,"—it is not possible they should do so; or τινάς, that some should, that any should renew them: and this I judge to be intended. For the impossibility mentioned respects the duty and endeavours of others. In vain shall any attempt their recovery by the use of any means whatever. And we must inquire what it is to be renewed, and what it is to be renewed again.

Παλιν. Now our ἀνακαινισμός is the renovation of the image of God in our natures, whereby we are dedicated again unto him. For as we had lost the image of God by sin, and were separated from him by things profane, this ἀνακαινισμός respects both the restoration of our nature and the dedication of our persons to God. And it is twofold:—

(1.) Real and internal, in regeneration and effectual sanctification, "The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost:" Tit. 3:5; 1 Thess. 5:23. But this is not that which is here intended. For this these apostates never had, and so cannot be said to be "renewed again" unto it; for no man can be renewed again unto that which he never had.

(2.) It is outward in the profession and pledge of it. Wherefore renovation, in this sense consists in the solemn confession of faith and repentance by Jesus Christ, with the seal of baptism received thereon; for thus it was with all those who were converted unto the gospel. Upon their profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they received the baptismal pledge of an inward renovation, though really they were not partakers thereof. But this estate was their ἀνακαινισμός, their "renovation." From this state they fell totally, renouncing Him who is the author of it, his grace which is the cause of it, and the ordinance which is the pledge thereof.

Hence it appears what it is παλιν ἀνακαινίζειν, "to renew them again." It is to bring them again into this state of profession by a second renovation, and a second baptism as a pledge thereof. This is determined to be impossible, and so unwarrantable for any to attempt. And for the most part such persons do openly fall into such blasphemies against, and engage (if they have power) into such persecution of the truth, as that they give themselves sufficient direction how others should behave themselves towards them. So the ancient church was satisfied in the case of Julian. This is the sum concerning what is affirmed of these apostates, namely, that "it is impossible to renew them unto repentance;" that is, so to act towards them as to bring them to that repentance whereby they may be instated in their former condition.

Hence sundry things may be observed for the clearing of the apostle's design in this discourse; as,—

(1.) Here is nothing said concerning the acceptance or refusal of any upon repentance or the profession thereof after any sin, to be made by the church, whose judgment is to be determined by other rules and circumstances. And this perfectly excludes the pretence of the Novatians from any countenance in these words. For whereas they would have drawn their warranty from hence for the utter exclusion from church communion of all those who had denied the faith in times of persecution, although they expressed a repentance whose sincerity they could not evince. Those only are intended who neither do nor can come to repentance itself, nor make a profession of it; with whom the church had no more to do. It is not said, that men who ever thus fell away shall not, upon their repentance, be admitted into their former state in the church; but that such is the severity of God against them that he will not again give them repentance unto life.

(2.) Here is nothing that may be brought in bar against such as, having fallen into any great sin, or any course in sinning, and that after light, convictions, and gifts received and exercised, desire to repent of their sins, and endeavour after sincerity therein; yea, such a desire and endeavour exempt any one from the judgment here threatened.

There is therefore in it that which tends greatly to the encouragement of such sinners. For whereas it is here declared, concerning those who are thus rejected of God, that "it is impossible to renew them," or to do any thing towards that which shall have a tendency to repentance, those who are not satisfied that they do yet savingly repent, but only are sincerely exercised how

they may attain thereunto, have no concernment in this commination, but evidently have the door of mercy still open unto them; for it is shut only against those who shall never endeavour to turn by repentance. And although persons so rejected of God may fall under convictions of their sin attended with despair, —which is unto them a foresight of their future condition,—yet as unto the least attempt after repentance on the terms of the gospel, they do never rise up unto it. Wherefore the impossibility intended, of what sort soever it be, respects the severity of God, not in refusing or rejecting the greatest sinners which seek after and would be renewed unto repentance,—which is contrary unto innumerable of his promises,—but in the giving up such sinners as those are here mentioned unto that obdurateness and obstinacy in sinning, that blindness of mind and hardness of heart, as that they neither can nor shall ever sincerely seek after repentance; nor may any means, according to the mind of God, be used to bring them thereunto. And the righteousness of the exercise of this severity is taken from the nature of this sin, or what is contained in it, which the apostle declares in the ensuing instances.

Hebrews 6: 7, 8

What the apostle had doctrinally instructed the Hebrews in before, in these verses he layeth before them under an apposite similitude. For his design herein is to represent the condition of all sorts of persons who profess the gospel, and live under the dispensation of its truths, with the various events that do befall them. He had before treated directly only of unfruitful and apostatizing professors, whom here he represents by unprofitable ground, and God's dealing with them as men do with such ground when they have tilled it in vain. For the church is a vine or vineyard, and God is the husbandman, John 15:1; Isa. 5:1–7. But here, moreover, for the greater illustration of what he affirms concerning such persons, he compriseth in his similitude the contrary state of sound believers and fruitful professors, with the acceptance they have with, and blessing they receive from God. And contraries thus compared do illustrate one another, as also the design of him who treateth concerning them. We need not, therefore, engage into a particular inquiry what it is which the word "for," whereby these verses are annexed and continued unto the precedent, doth peculiarly and immediately respect, concerning which there is some difference among expositors. Some suppose it is the dealing of God with apostates, before laid down, which the apostle regards, and in these verses gives an account of the reason of it, or whence it is they come unto such a woful end. Others, observing

that in his whole ensuing discourse he insists principally, if not only, on the state of sound believers and their acceptance with God, suppose he hath immediate respect unto what he had declared in the beginning of the chapter, verses 1–3, concerning his design to carry them on unto perfection. But there is no need that we should restrain his purpose to either of these intentions exclusively unto the other; yea, it is contrary to the plain scope of his discourse so to do. For he compriseth both sorts of professors, and gives a lively representation of their condition, of God's dealing with them, and the event thereof. The reason, therefore, that he gives is not to be confined to either sort exclusively, but extends itself equally to the whole subject treated of.

Ver. 7, 8.—Γῆ γὰρ ἡ πιοῦσα τὸν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς πολλάκις ἐρχόμενον ὑετὸν, καὶ τίκτουσα βοτάνην εὔθετον ἐκείνοις δι᾽ οὓς καὶ γεωργεῖται, μεταλαμβάνει εὐλογίας ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἐκφέρουσα δὲ ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους ἀδόκιμος καὶ κατάρας ἐγγὺς, ἧς τὸ τέλος εἰς καῦσιν.

There is not any thing materially to be observed concerning these words in any translations, ancient or modern. They all agree, unless one or two that openly depart from the text; and which, therefore, are of no consideration. Only δι᾽ οὓς is by the Syriac rendered דְּמָטוּלָתְהוֹן, "propter quos," "for whom;" all others read "per quos," or "a quibus," "by whom;" only ours mark "for whom" in the margin, which indeed is the more usual signification of διά with an accusative case. But that is not infrequently put for the genitive. And although this be not usual in other authors, yet unquestionable instances of it may be given, and amongst them that of Demosthen. Olynth. i. cap. vi. is eminent: Καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν τρόπον, δι᾽ ὃν μέγας γέγονεν ἀσθενὴς ὢν τοκαταρχὰς Φίλιππος, "And seeth the way whereby (by which) Philip, who at first was weak, became so great." But into the proper sense of this expression in this place we must inquire afterwards.

Ver. 7, 8.—For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

Some things must be observed concerning this similitude in general before we inquire into the particulars of it. 1. The ἀπόδοσις, or application of it, is left included in the πρότασις, or proposition of the similitude itself, and is not expressed. A description is given of the earth, by its culture, fruit, or barrenness; but nothing is especially added of the things signified hereby, although those

are principally intended. And the way of reasoning herein, as it is compendious, so it is plain and instructive, because the analogy between the things produced in the similitude and the things signified is plain and evident, both in itself and from the whole discourse of the apostle.

2. There is a common subject of the whole similitude, branched out into distinct parts, with very different events ascribed unto them. We must therefore consider both what is that common subject, as also wherein the distinct parts whereinto it is branched do agree on the one hand and differ on the other. (1.) The common subject is "the earth," of the nature whereof both branches are equally participant. Originally and naturally they differ not, they are both the earth. (2.) On this common subject, in both branches of it, the rain equally falls; not upon one more and the other less, not upon one sooner and the other later. (3.) It is equally dressed, tilled, or manured, by or for the use of some; one part doth not lie neglected whilst the other is cared for.

In these things there is an agreement, and all is equal in both branches of the common subject. But hereon a partition is made, or a distribution of this common subject into two parts or sorts, with a double difference between them; and that, (1.) On their own parts; (2.) Of God's dealing with them. For, (1.) The one part brings forth "herbs;" which are described by their usefulness, they are "meet for them by whom it is dressed." The other beareth "thorns and briers,"—things not only of no use or advantage, but moreover noxious and hurtful. (2.) They differ in the consequent, on the part of God: for the first sort "receiveth blessing from God;" the other, in opposition unto this blessing from God (whence we may also learn what is contained therein), is first "rejected," then "cursed," then "burned."

Before I proceed to the particular explication of the words, inquiry must be made into the especial design of the apostle in them with respect unto these Hebrews. For here is not only a threatening of what might come to pass, but a particular prediction of what would come to pass, and a declaration of what was already in part accomplished. For by the "earth" he understands in an especial manner the church and nation of the Jews. This was God's vineyard, Isa. 5:7. Hereunto he sent all his ministers, and last of all his Son, Matt. 21:35–37; Jer. 2:21. And to them he calls, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD," Jer. 22:29. Upon this earth the rain often fell, in the ministerial dispensation of the word unto that church and people. With respect hereunto Christ says unto them, ποσάκις, "how often would I have gathered thy children," Matt. 23:37; as here the rain is said to fall πολλάκις, often upon it.

This was the earth wherein were the plants of God's especial planting. And these were all now distributed into two parts. 1. Those who, believing and obeying the gospel, brought forth the fruits of repentance, faith, and new obedience. These being effectually wrought upon by the power of God in the new creation, our apostle compares to the earth in the old creation, when it was first made by God and blessed of him. Then, in the first place, it brought forth דֶּשֶׁא; that is, βοτάνην, as the LXX. render the word,—"herb" meet for Him that made and blessed it, Gen. 1:11. And these were still to be continued the vineyard of God, a field which he cared for. This was that gospel church gathered of the Hebrews, which brought forth fruit to the glory of God, and was blessed of him. This was the remnant among them according to the election of grace, which obtained mercy when the rest were blinded, Rom. 11:5, 7.

2. For the remainder of this people, the residue of this earth, it was made up of two sorts, which are both of them here cast under the same lot and condition. There were obstinate unbelievers on the one hand, who pertinaciously rejected Christ and the gospel; with hypocritical apostates on the other, who having for a season embraced its profession, fell off again unto their Judaism. All these the apostle compares unto the earth when the covenant of God with the creation was broken by the sin of man, and it was put under the curse. Hereof it is said קוֹץ וְדַרְדַּר תַּצְמִיחַ, Gen. 3:18; ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους ἀνατελεῖ, as the LXX. renders it,—the very words here used by the apostle; it "beareth thorns and briers." Such was this church and people, now they had broken and rejected the covenant of God by their unbelief,—earth that brought forth thorns and briers. "The best of them was as a brier, and the most upright of them as a thorn hedge." Then was the day of their prophets nigh,—the day of their visitation foretold by the prophets, their watchmen, Micah 7:4. So God threatened that when he rejected his vineyard it should bring forth briers and thorns, Isa. 5:6.

And of these unbelieving and apostate Hebrews, or this barren earth, the apostle affirmeth three things:—

1. That it was ἀδόκιμος, "rejected," or not approved; that is, of God. Hereof they had boasted, and herein they continued yet to pride themselves, that God owned them, that they were his people, and preferred above all others. But although God was pleased yet to exercise patience towards them, he had

pronounced concerning them in general that they were not his people, that he owned them not. Thorns and briers were come upon their altars, so that both their persons and worship were rejected of God.

2. It was "nigh unto cursing." And this curse, which it was now very nigh unto, had in it,—(1.) Barrenness; and, (2.) An unalterable and irrevocable destination unto destruction. (1.) It had in it barrenness; for this church of the Jews, made up now of infidels and apostates, was represented by the fig-tree cursed by our Saviour: Matt. 21:19, "He said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward for ever. And presently the fig-tree withered away." After this time, the gospel having been sufficiently tendered unto them, and rejected by them, there was no more of saving faith, repentance, or obedience, nothing that was acceptable unto God in holiness or worship, ever found amongst them to this day. Many Jews were after this converted, but the church of the Jews never bare any more fruits unto God. And, (2.) They were devoted unto destruction. The close of the Old Testament, and therein of the immediate solemn revelation of God unto that church, was, that if they received not the Lord Christ after the coming and ministry of Elijah,—that is, of John the Baptist,—God would "come and smite the earth with a curse," Mal. 4:6. He would make it a thing anathematized, or sacredly devoted unto destruction,—מָחֳרָם.

When God first brought them into his land, which was to be the seat of his ordinances and solemn worship, the first town that they came unto was Jericho. This, therefore, God anathematized, or devoted to perpetual destruction, with a curse upon him that should attempt its re-edification, Josh. 6:17. The whole land thereby was alienated from its former possessors, and devoted unto another use, and the place itself utterly destroyed. Jerusalem, and consequently the whole church, was now to be made as Jericho; and the curse denounced was now speedily to be put in execution, wherein the land was to be alienated from their right unto it, and be devoted to desolation.

3. The end of all this was, that this earth should be "burned." A universal desolation, according to the prediction of our Saviour, by fire and sword, representing the eternal vengeance they were liable unto, was to come upon them. This was now approaching, namely, the end of their church and state, in the destruction of the city, temple, and nation.

This was the especial design of the apostle with respect unto these Hebrews; and he adds this scheme or delineation of the present and approaching condition of that apostatized church, to give terror unto the commination that he gave unto unprofitable professors. But whereas all things unto the very last happened unto them as types, and the condition of the churches of the gospel is represented in their sin and punishment; and whereas the things reflected on are such as it is the common and constant concernment of all professors heedfully to consider, I shall open the words in the whole latitude of their signification, as they are peculiarly instructive unto us.

Ἡ γῆ. FIRST, The subject of the proposition in the similitude, is the "earth;" and that which is represented thereby, is the hearts and minds of all those to whom the gospel is preached. So it is explained in that parable of our Saviour wherein he expresseth the word of the gospel as preached by seed, and compares the hearers of it unto several sorts of ground whereinto that seed is cast. And the allusion is wonderfully apposite and instructive. For,—

1. Seed is the principle of all things living, of all things that, having any kind of natural life, are capable of natural increase, growth, and fruit; and whatever they arrive unto, it is but the actuating of the vital seed from whence they do proceed. So is the word of the gospel unto all spiritual life, 1 Pet. 1:23. And believers, because of their growth, increase, and fruit, from this vital principle or seed of the word, are called "vines," "plants of God's planting," and the like.

2. The earth is the only fit and proper subject for seed to be put into, and alone is capable of the culture or husbandry that is to be used about it. God hath made no other matter or subject to receive the seeds of things that may bring forth fruit; no man casts seed into the air or water. It was of the earth alone that God said, "Let it bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth," Gen. 1:11, 12. The earth alone hath a passive power to be made fruitful; it hath that matter in it which, being cultivated, disposed, excited, sowed, planted, blessed, may bring forth fruit. So it is with the souls of men with respect unto the seed of the word. Their minds, and they alone, are a subject capable of receiving of it, and improving it. They are the only meet object of divine care and culture. The faculties of our souls, our minds, wills, and affections, are meet to entertain the gospel, and to bring forth the fruits of it; whereof nothing is found in any other creatures on the earth. Hence we are Θεοῦ γεώργιον, 1 Cor. 3:9, "God's

husbandry," the ground or field that he tilleth; as Christ mystical, comprising all professors, is the vine, and his Father is the husbandman, John 15:1, by whom it is dressed and pruned.

3. The earth by and of itself, in the state wherein it is, brings forth nothing that is good or useful. Upon its first creation it was inlaid and impregnated, by the blessing of God, with all seeds of useful herbs and fruits; but after the entrance of sin, its womb was cursed with barrenness as unto its first usefulness, and it brings forth nothing of itself but thorns, briers, and noxious weeds,—at least those in such abundance as to choke and corrupt all the remainders of useful seeds and plants in it. It is, like the field of the slothful, grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof. Especially it is condemned to utter barrenness if the rain fall not on it; whereof afterwards. And such are the hearts and minds of men by nature. They are dark, barren, unprofitable, and which, without divine culture, will bring forth no fruits of righteousness, that are acceptable unto God. All that of themselves they can bring forth are noxious weeds. Among the weeds of unmanured earth some are painted with alluring colours, but they are but weeds still; and among the fruits of unsanctified minds some may carry a more specious appearance than others, but they are all, spiritually considered, sins and vices still. So, then, the common subject of the similitude is plain and instructive. And we may in our passage observe, that,—

Obs. I. The minds of all men by nature are universally and equally barren with respect unto fruits of righteousness and holiness, meet for and acceptable unto God.

They are all as the earth under the curse. There is a natural difference among men as unto their intellectual abilities. Some are of a far more piercing and sagacious understanding, and of a sounder judgment than others. Some have a natural temper and inclination disposing them unto gentleness, sobriety, and modesty, when others from their constitution are morose, passionate, and perverse. And hereon some make a good progress in morality and usefulness in the world, whilst others lie immersed in all vicious abominations. There are therefore, on these and the like accounts, great differences among men, wherein some are incomparably to be preferred above others. But as to the fruits of spiritual holiness and righteousness, all men by nature are equal and alike; for our nature, as unto a principle of living unto God, is equally corrupted in all. There are no more sparks or relics of grace in one than another. All spiritual differences between men are from the power and grace of God in the dispensation of the word. But we must proceed.

Ἡ πιοῦσα τὸν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς πολλάκις ἐρχόμενον ὑετόν SECONDLY, Of this earth it is said, that it "drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it." Something is wanting, something must be done to this barren earth to make it fruitful; and this is done by rain. And that is described by,—1. Its communication or application unto the earth,—it falls upon it; 2. An especial adjunct thereof in its frequency,—it falls often on it; 3. By that reception which the earth is naturally fitted and suited to give unto it,—it drinketh it in.

The thing itself is rain. This is that whereby alone the earth, otherwise dry and barren, is impregnated and made fruitful. For, there is therein a communication of moisture, absolutely requisite to apply the nourishing virtue of the earth unto the radical principles of all fruits whatever; and therefore before any rain did fall God caused a vapour to arise, which supplied the use of it, and watered the earth, Gen. 2:6. So the poet expresseth it:—

"Tum Pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus Æther,

Conjugis in gremium lætæ descendit, et omnes

Magnus alit, magno commistus corpore, fetus."—Georg. ii. 325.

And ὑετός is a "wetting shower;" not a storm, not a violence of rain causing an inundation, which tends to barrenness and sterility; nor such as is unseasonable and spoils the fruits of the earth; but a plentiful shower is intended: for ὑετός exceeds ὄμβρος, as Aristotle observes.

1. This rain falls on the ground. And, 2. It is said to fall often or frequently, "iteratis vicibus." The land of Canaan is commended that it was not like the land of Egypt, where the seed was sowed, and watered with the foot, but that it was "a land of hills and valleys, and did drink water of the rain of heaven," Deut. 11:10, 11. And they had commonly two seasons of it, the former whereof they called יוֹרֶה, Joreh, and the latter מַלְקוֹשׁ, Malcosh, Deut. 11:14. The former fell about October, in the beginning of their year, when their seed was cast into the ground, and the earth, as it were, taught thereby, as the word signifies, to apply itself unto the seed, and to become fruitful. The other fell about March, when their corn was grown up, filling the straw and ear for the harvest, as the word probably signifies. Hence it is said, that "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest," Josh. 3:15, 1 Chron. 12:15; which was occasioned by the falling of Malcosh, or this latter rain. And that this was in the first month, or March, which was the entrance of their harvest, is evident from hence, in that immediately after they had passed over Jordan, during the swelling of its waters, they kept the passover at Gilgal on the fourteenth of that first month, Josh. 5:10.

Whilst they had these rains in their proper seasons, the land was fruitful; and it was by withholding of them that God punished them with the barrenness of the earth, and famine thereon ensuing. Besides these, in good seasons, they had many other occasional showers; as mention is made of the "showers on the mown grass." Hence it is here supposed that the rain falls πολλάκις, "often," on this earth. Again,—

3. The earth is said to drink in the rain. The expression is metaphorical but common: Ἡ γῆ μέλαινα πίνει. And the allusion is taken from living creatures, who by drinking take in water into their inward parts and bowels. To do thus is peculiar unto the earth. If the rain falls upon rocks or stones, it runs off from them, it hath no admission into them but into the earth it soaks more or less, according as the condition of the ground is more or less receptive of it. And it is the nature of the earth, as it were, to suck in these moistening rains that fall upon it, until it be even inebriated: Ps. 65:9, 10, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it, ... Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof;"—תְּלַמֶּיהָ רַוֵּיתָ, "thou inebriatest" (or "makest drunk") "the furrows thereof."

This is the πρότασις, or proposition of the similitude. The ἀπόδοσις is included in it; that is, the application of it unto the matter in hand. That by the "earth," the minds and consciences of men are intended, was before declared; and it is as evident what is meant by the "rain." Yet some suppose that the gifts of the Holy Ghost, before treated of, may be designed by the apostle; for in the communication of them the Holy Spirit is frequently said to be poured out; that is, as water or rain. But, 1. This rain is said to fall often on the earth (yea, upon that earth which continueth utterly barren), in one shower after another. And this can be no way accommodated unto the dispensation of the gifts of the Spirit; for they being once communicated, if they be not exercised and improved, God gives no more showers of them. It is therefore the administration of the word that is intended. And in other places the doctrine of the Scripture is frequently compared unto rain and watering: Deut. 32:2, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." And where God denies his word unto any people, he says, "Upon them shall be no rain," Zech. 14:17. And hence נָטַף, "to drop" as the rain doth, is an expression for prophesying or preaching, Ezek. 21:2, Amos 7:16; the showers whereof are sometimes more soft and gentle, sometimes more earnest and pressing. And those words, גַּם־

בְּרָכוֹת יַעְטֶה מוֹרֶה, Ps. 84:7, because of the ambiguity of the words, and the proportion that is between the things, are rendered by some, "The rain also filleth the pools;" and by others, "The teachers shall be filled with blessings." This is that whereby God watereth and refresheth the barren souls of men, that whereby he communicates unto them all things that may enable them to be fruitful; in brief, not to enlarge on the allegory, the word of the gospel is every way unto the souls of men as the rain to the barren earth.

2. This rain is said to fall often on the earth. And this may be considered either with respect unto the especial concernment of these Hebrews, which was laid open before, or unto the ordinary dispensation of the gospel. In the first way it regards and expresseth the frequent addresses made unto the people of the Jews in the ministry of the word, for their healing and recovery from those ways of ruin wherein they were engaged. And so it may include the ministry of the prophets, with the close put unto it by that of Christ himself; concerning which see our exposition on chap. 1:1, 2. And concerning this whole ministry it is that our Saviour so expostulates with them, Matt. 23:37, "How often would I have gathered your children!" And this also he at large represents in the parable of the householder and his vineyard, with the servants that he sent unto it from time to time to seek for fruit, and last of all his Son, Matt. 21:33–37. Take it in the latter way, for the dispensation of the word in general, and the manner of it, with frequency and urgency, is included in this expression. Where the Lord Christ sends the gospel to be preached, it is his will that it should be so "instantly, in season and out of season," that it may come as abundant showers of rain on the earth.

3. This rain is said to be drunk in: "The earth drinketh in the rain." There is no more intended in this expression but the outward hearing of the word, a naked assent unto it. For it is ascribed unto them who continue utterly barren and unhealed; who are therefore left unto fire and destruction. But as it is the natural property of the earth to receive in the water that is poured on it, so men do in some sense drink in the doctrine of the gospel, when the natural faculties of their souls do apprehend it and assent unto it, though it work not upon them, though it produce no effects in them. There are, indeed, in the earth rocks and stones, on which the rain makes no impression; but they are considered in common with the rest of the earth, and there needs no particular exception on their account. Some there are who, when the word is preached unto them, do obstinately refuse and reject it; but the hearers in common are

said to drink it in, and the other sort shall not escape the judgment which is appointed for them. And thus far things are spoken in general, what is common unto both those sorts of hearers, which he afterwards distinctly insists upon.

The word of the gospel, in the preaching of it, being compared unto rain, we may observe, that,—

Obs. II. The dispensation of it unto men is an effect of the sovereign power and pleasure of God, as is the giving of rain unto the earth.

There is nothing in nature that God assumeth more into his prerogative than this of giving rain. The first mention of it in the world is in these words, "The LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth," Gen. 2:5. All rain is from the Lord God, who causeth it to rain or not to rain, at his pleasure. And the giving of it he pleads as a great pledge of his providence and goodness. "He left not himself" of old "without witness, in that he did good, and gave rain from heaven," Acts 14:17. Our Saviour also makes it an argument of his goodness that he "causeth his rain to fall," Matt. 5:45. And whatever thoughts we have of the commonness of it, and whatever acquaintance men suppose they have with its causes, yet God distinguished himself, as to his almighty power, from all the idols of the world, that none of them can give rain. He calls his people to say in their hearts, "Let us fear the LORD our God, who giveth rain," Jer. 5:24. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers?" Jer. 14:22. And he exerciseth his sovereignty in the giving of it: Amos 4:7, 8, "I caused it to rain upon one city, and not to rain upon another: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained nut withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water." And thus is it absolutely as to the dispensation of the gospel to nations, cities, places, persons; it is at God's disposal alone, and he useth a distinguishing sovereignty therein. He sendeth his word unto one people and not to another, to one city and not to another, at one time and not at another; and these are those matters of his whereof he giveth no account. Only some things we may consider, which give us a prospect into the glory of his wisdom and grace herein: and this I shall do in two instances; first, in the principle of his dispensation; secondly, in the outward means of it. As,—

1. The principal end which he designeth in his disposal of the dispensation of the gospel in that great variety wherein we do behold it, is the conversion, edification, and salvation of his elect. This is that which he aimeth to accomplish thereby; and therefore his will and purpose herein is that which

gives rule and measure unto the actings of his providence concerning it. Wherever there are any of his elect to be called, or in what time soever, there and then will he cause the gospel to be preached; for the purpose of God, which is according to election, must stand, whatever difficulties lie in the way, Rom. 9:11. And the election must obtain, chap. 11:7. So the Lord Christ prayed that he would take care of all those that he had given unto him, which were his own by election ("Thine they were, and thou gavest them unto me"), and sanctify them by his word, John 17:17. In pursuit of his own purpose, and in answer unto that prayer of our Lord Jesus, he will send his word to find them out wherever they are, that so not one grain of his chosen Israel shall be lost or fall to the ground. So he appointed our apostle to stay and preach at Corinth, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions he met withal, because "he had much people in that city," Acts 18:9, 10. They were his people by eternal designation, antecedently unto their effectual vocation; and therefore he will have the word preached unto them. And in the hard work of his ministry, the same apostle, who knew the end of it, affirms that "he endured all things for the elect's sakes," 2 Tim. 2:10. That they might be called and saved was the work he was sent upon. For "whom he did predestinate, them he also calleth," Rom. 8:30. Predestination is the rule of effectual vocation; all and only they are so called by the word who are predestinated. So speaks our Saviour also, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice," John 10:16. He had some sheep in that fold of the church of the Jews; to them, therefore, he preached the word, that they might be gathered unto him. But he had other sheep also, even all his elect among the Gentiles, and saith he, "Them must I gather also." There is a necessity of it, upon the account of the purpose of God concerning them; and they are to be gathered by hearing of his voice, or the preaching of the word. In that sovereignty, therefore, which God useth in the disposal thereof, causing the rain of the doctrine of his word to fall upon one place and not upon another, at one time and not at another, he hath still this certain end before him; and the actings of his providence are regulated by the purposes of his grace. In what place or nation soever, in what time or age soever, he hath any of his elect to be brought forth in the world, he will provide that the gospel of peace be preached unto them. I will not say that in every individual place where the gospel is preached there are always some of the elect to be saved. For the enjoyments of one place may be occasioned by the work that is to be done in another, wherewith it is in some kind of conjunction: or the word may be preached in a place for the sake of some that are there only accidentally; as

when Paul first preached at Philippi, Lydia only was converted, who was a stranger in those parts, belonging to the city of Thyatira in Asia, Acts 16:14, 15: and a whole country may fare the better for one city, and a whole city for some part of it, as Micah 5:7. God concealeth this secret design under promiscuous outward dispensations. For he obligeth those by whom the word is preached to declare his mind therein unto all men indefinitely, leaving the effectual work of his grace in the pursuit of his purpose unto himself; whence "they believe who are ordained to eternal life," and "those are added to the church that are to be saved," Acts 2:47, 13:48. Besides, God hath other ends also in the sending of his word, though this be the principal. For by it he puts a restraint unto sin in the world, gives a visible control to the kingdom of Satan, and relieves mankind, by sending light into those dark places of the earth which are filled with habitations of cruelty. And by the convictions that he brings thereby on the minds and consciences of men, he makes way for the manifestation of the glory of his justice in their condemnation. Coming and speaking unto them, he leaves them without pretence or excuse, John 15:22. Yet will I not say that God sends the word for any continuance for these ends and designs only. For a short time he may do so; as our Saviour, sending forth his disciples to preach, supposeth that in some place their message may be totally rejected, and thereon appointed them to "shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them," or their being left without excuse. But these are but secondary and accidental ends of the word where it is constantly preached. Wherefore God doth not so send it for their sakes alone. But on the other side, I dare say, that where God doth not, by any means, nor in any degree, send his word, there are none of his elect to be saved; for without the word they can neither be called nor sanctified. And if any of them are in any such place as whereunto he will not grant his word, he will, by one providence or other, snatch them like brands out of the fire, and convey them under the showers of it. And this we find verified by experience every day. The gospel, therefore, doth not pass up and down the world by chance, as we know in how great variety it hath visited and left nations and people, ages and times; nor is the disposal of it regulated by the wisdom and contrivance of men, whatever their work and duty may be in the dispensation of it; but all this, like the falling of the rain, is regulated by the sovereign wisdom and pleasure of God, wherein he hath respect only unto the purpose of his own eternal grace.

2. He doth, according to his sovereign pleasure, call and send persons to the preaching of it unto those to whom he will grant the privilege thereof. Every man may not upon his own head, nor can any man upon his own abilities, undertake and discharge that work. This is the eternal rule and law of the gospel: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But "how shall men call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. 10:13–15,—that is, by God himself: for neither doth the apostle discourse, nor hath he any occasion in that place to discourse, concerning the ordinary call of persons unto an office in the church, whereunto the ministry of the church itself is required; but he treats of preaching the gospel in general unto all or any parts of the world, and of the love and care of God in sending of men unto that purpose, whereby others coming to hear of him, may believe in him, call upon his name, and be saved. Hence he compares the work of God herein unto that of his sending forth light and natural instructions unto all the world by the luminaries of heaven, wherein the ministry of man hath no place, verse 18. Wherefore the preaching of the gospel depends absolutely on the sovereign pleasure of God in sending men unto that work; for "how should they preach except they be sent?" And he doth send them,—

(1.) By endowing them with spiritual gifts, enabling them unto that work and duty. The gospel is "the ministration of the Spirit;" nor is it to be administered but by virtue of the gifts of the Spirit. These God gives unto them whom he sends, by Jesus Christ, Eph. 4:7, 8, etc. And these gifts are a sort of especial, peculiar, yea, supernatural abilities, whereby men are fitted to and enabled for the dispensation of the gospel. It is sad to consider what woful work they make who undertake this duty, and are yet unfurnished with these abilities; that is, such who are sent of men, but are not sent of God. They harness themselves with external order, ecclesiastical mission, according to some rules agreed upon among themselves, with some other implements and ornamental accoutrements; whereon they undertake to be preachers of the gospel, as it were whether God will or no. But these vanities of the Gentiles cannot give rain; the preaching of the gospel, as unto its proper ends, depends on God's sending alone. When they betake themselves to their work, they find themselves at a loss for God's mission; at least they do so unto whom they pretend to be sent. I speak it not as though outward order and a due call were not necessary in a church unto the office of a teacher, but only to show that all

order without a concurrence of the divine vocation is of no validity nor efficacy. Now, the dispensation of these spiritual gifts, without which the rain of the doctrine of the gospel falleth not, depends solely on the sovereignty of God. The Spirit divideth unto every one as he pleaseth, 1 Cor. 12:11. And it is evident that he doth not herein follow the rule of any human preparation. For whereas it is most certain, that the improvement of men's intellectual abilities, in wisdom, learning, oratory, and the like, is exceedingly subservient unto the use and exercise of these spiritual gifts, yet it is evident that God doth not always and regularly communicate them unto those who are so prepared; no, though they were acquired in a rational way, in order unto the work of the ministry. For how many may we see so qualified, and yet destitute of all relish of spiritual gifts, God preferring before them persons, it may be, behind and beneath them in those qualifications! So it was whilst all these affairs were transacted in an extraordinary manner at the first planting of the gospel. He did not choose out eminently the philosophers, the wise, the learned, the scribes, the disputers of this world, to communicate spiritual gifts unto; but generally fixed on persons of another condition and more ordinary capacity. Some were so, that none might think themselves excluded because of their wisdom and learning,—things excellent in themselves; but many of this sort, as our apostle informs us, were not called and chosen unto this work. So something in proportion hereunto may yet be observed in the distribution of the ordinary gifts of the Spirit; at least it is evident that herein God obligeth himself to no rules of such preparations or qualifications on our part. Nay, which is yet further, he walks not herein in the steps of his own sanctifying and saving grace; but as he worketh that grace in the hearts of many on whom be bestows not those gifts which are needful to enable men unto the dispensation of the gospel, so he bestows those gifts on many unto whom he will not vouchsafe his sanctifying grace. And these things make evident that sovereignty which God is pleased to exercise in his sending of persons unto the work of preaching the gospel, manifesting that the whole of it depends, like the giving of rain, absolutely on his pleasure. And when men exclusively unto this part of God's call will keep up a ministry, and so make a preaching of the gospel, it is but a lifeless image of the true dispensation of it.

(2.) This communication of gifts unto men is ordinarily accompanied with a powerful and effectual inclination of the minds of men to undertake the work and engage in it, against those objections, discouragements, oppositions, and difficulties, which present themselves unto them in their undertaking. There is

so, I say, ordinarily: for there are more instances than one of those who, having the word of prophecy committed unto them, instead of going to Nineveh, do consult their own reputation, ease, and advantage, and so tack about to Tarshish; and there are not a few who hide and napkin up their talents, which are given them to trade withal, though represented unto us under one instance only. But these must one day answer for their disobedience unto the heavenly call. But ordinarily that inclination and disposition unto this work, which accompanies the communication of spiritual gifts, is prevalent and effectual, so that the minds of men are fortified by it against the lions that are in the way, or whatever may rise up to deter them from it. So our apostle affirms, that upon the revelation of Christ unto him, and his call thereby to preach the gospel, "immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia" about his work, Gal. 1:16, 17. He would not so much as attend or hearken unto cavils and exceptions against the work whereunto he was inclined and disposed; which is the way of a well-grounded, firm resolution. And something in proportion hereunto is wrought in the minds of them who undertake this work upon an ordinary call of God. And where this is not, much success is not to be expected in the work of any, nor any great blessing of God upon it. When men go out hereunto in their own strength, without a supply of spiritual gifts, and engage in their work merely upon external considerations, without this divine inclination of their hearts and minds, they may seem to cast out water as out of an engine, by violent compression,—they will never be like clouds to pour forth showers of rain. This, therefore, also is from the Lord. Again,—

Obs. III. God ordereth things, in his sovereign, unsearchable providence, so as that the gospel shall be sent unto, and in the administration of it shall find admittance into, what places, and at what times, seem good unto himself, even as he orders the rain to fall on one place, and not on another.—We have not wisdom to search into the causes, reasons, and ends of God's providential works in the world; and individual persons seldom live to see the issue of those which are on the wheel in their own days. But we have ground enough in the Scripture to conclude, that the principal works of divine providence in the world, and among the nations of the earth, do respect the dispensation of the gospel, either in the granting of it or the taking of it away. It were an easy matter to evince by evident instances that the principal national revolutions which have been in the earth, have been all of them subservient unto the counsel and purpose of God in this matter. And there are examples also manifesting how small occasions he hath turned unto great and signal use herein. But what hath been spoken may

suffice to evince who is the Father and Author of this rain. And how this consideration may be improved unto the exercise of faith, prayer, and thankfulness, is manifest.

This rain is said to fall upon the earth; which respects the actual dispensation of the word by them unto whom it is committed. And we may thence observe, that,—

Obs. IV. It is the duty of those unto whom the dispensation of the word is committed of God, to be diligent, watchful, instant in their work, that their doctrine may, as it were, continually drop and distil upon their hearers, that the rain may fall often on the earth. So hath God provided that "the ridges of it may be watered abundantly, to make it soft" (or "dissolve it") "with showers; and so he blesseth the springing thereof," Ps. 65:10. In a hot, parching, and dry season, one or two showers do but increase the vehemency of the heat and drought, giving matter of new exhalations, which are accompanied with some of the remaining moisture of the earth. Of no other use is that dead and lazy kind of preaching wherewith some satisfy themselves, and would force others to be contented.

The apostles, when this work was committed unto them, would not be diverted from a constant attendance unto it by any other duty, much less any other occasion of life, Acts 6:2–4. See what a charge our apostle gives unto Timothy to this purpose, 2 Tim. 4:1–5. And a great example hereof we have in the account he gives concerning his own ministry in Asia, Acts 20. 1. He declares when he began his work and ministry,—"the first day he came into Asia," verse 18; that is, on the first opportunity: he omitted no season that he could possibly lay hold upon, but engaged into his work, as his manner was in every place that he came unto. And, 2. In what manner did he teach? He did it, (1.) Publicly, in all assemblies of the church, and others also where he might have a quiet opportunity of speaking; and, (2.) Privately, "from house to house," verse 20. All places were alike to him, and all assemblies, small or great, so he might have advantage of communicating unto them the knowledge of God in Christ. And, 3. What did he so declare unto them, or instruct them in? It was "the whole counsel of God," verse 27; "the gospel of the grace of God," verse 24; all things that were "profitable unto them," verse 20; in sum, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," verse 21. And, 4. How did he dispense the word unto them? It was by a declaration of the will of God, verse 27; by testifying the necessity of gospel duties, verse 21; by constant warnings and admonitions, to stir men up unto diligence in obedience, and to caution them

of their dangers, verse 31. And, 5. When, or at what season, did he thus lay out himself in the discharge of this duty? He did it "night and day," verse 31; that is, continually, upon all occasions and advantages. He was one by whom God watered his vineyard every moment. And, 6. In what outward condition was he, and with what frame of spirit did he attend his work? He was in "many temptations, which befell him by the lying in wait of the Jews," verse 19, or in continual danger of his life by the persecutions they stirred up against him. And as unto himself, and the frame of his heart in this work, he carried it on "with all humility of mind, and with many tears," verses 19, 31. He was not lifted up with conceits of the glory, greatness, and power of his office, of the authority over all the churches committed unto him by Christ; but with lowliness of mind and meekness was as the servant of them all; with that love, tenderness, compassion, and fervency, as he could not but testify by many tears. Here is the great example for dispensers of the gospel. We have not his grace, we have not his gifts, we have not his ability and assistance, and so are not able to come up unto him; but yet certainly it is our duty to follow him though "haud passibus æquis," and to conform ourselves unto him according to our opportunity and ability. I confess I cannot but admire to think what some men conceive concerning him, or themselves. Can they say, that from the first day of their coming into their dioceses or dignities, or parishes or places, they have thus behaved themselves? Have they so taught, so preached, so warned, and that "with tears, night and day," all sorts of persons whom they suppose themselves to relate unto? Have they made it their work to declare the mysteries of the gospel, and "the whole counsel of God," and this both publicly and privately, night and day, according to their opportunities? It will be said, indeed, that these things belonged unto the duty and office of the apostles, but those that succeed them as ordinary overseers of the church may live in another manner, and have other work to do. If they should carry it with that humility of mind as he did, and use entreaties with tears as he did, and preach continually as he did, they should have little joy of their office; and besides, they should be even despised of the people. These things, therefore, they suppose not to belong unto them. Yea, but our apostle gives this whole account concerning himself unto the ordinary bishops of the church of Ephesus, verses 17, 28; and in the close of it tells them, that he had showed them all things how they ought to do, verse 35. And what he apprehended to be the duty of all to whom the dispensation of the word is committed, he manifests in his last solemn charge that he left with his son Timothy a little before his death: 2 Tim. 4:1, 2, "I charge thee therefore before

God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;" so verse 5. He did no more himself than what he requires in Timothy, according to the proportion of his abilities. And the discharge of this work is not to be measured by particular instances of the frequency of preaching, but by that purpose, design, and frame of heart, which ought to be in ministers, of laying out themselves to the utmost in the work of the ministry on all occasions, resolving "to spend and to be spent" therein. I could easily show on how many accounts frequency and urgency in preaching of the word are indispensably required of those unto whom the work is committed, that therein the rain may fall oft upon the earth; but I must not too far digress. The command of God; the love and care of Christ towards his church; the ends of God's patience and long-suffering; the future manifestation of his glory in the salvation of believers and the condemnation of those that are disobedient; the necessities of the souls of men; the nature and kind of the way whereby God gives spiritual supplies by the ministry of the word; the weakness of our natural faculties of the mind in receiving, Heb. 5:11, Isa. 28:9, 10, and of the memory in retaining spiritual things, Heb. 2:1, 12:5; the weakness of grace, Rev. 3:2, requiring continual refreshments, Isa. 27:3; the frequency and variety of temptations, interrupting our peace with God, nor otherwise to be repelled, 2 Cor. 12:8, 9; the design of Christ to bring us gradually unto perfection,—might all be pleaded in this case: but the law of this duty is in some measure written in the hearts of all faithful ministers, and those who are otherwise shall bear their own burdens.

Again; it is common to the whole earth often to drink in the rain that falls upon it, though but some parts only of it prove fruitful, as it will appear in the following distribution of them. Whence we may observe, that,—

Obs. V. Attendance unto the word preached, hearing of it with some diligence, and giving of it some kind of reception, make no great difference among men; for this is common unto them who never become fruitful.—This is so plainly exemplified by our Saviour in the parable of the several sorts of ground that receive the seed of the word, yet on various occasions lose the power of it, and never come to fruit-bearing, that it needs no further consideration. And I intend not those only who merely hear the word, and no more. Such persons are like stones, which when the rain falleth on them it makes no impression into them; they drink it not in at all. It is no otherwise, I say, with many hearers, who seem not to have the least sense of what customarily they

attend unto. But those are intended in the text and proposition who in some measure receive it and drink it in. They give it an entrance into their understandings, where they become doctrinally acquainted with the truth of the gospel; and they give it some entrance into their affections, whence they are said to "receive the word with joy;" and moreover, they allow it some influence on their conversations,—as even Herod did, who heard the preachings of John Baptist "gladly, and did many things" thereon. All these things men may do, and yet at length prove to be that part of the earth which drinks in the rain and is yet absolutely barren, and brings forth thorns and briers. There is yet wanting the "receiving of it in a good and honest heart;" which what it includes will afterwards appear. And again we may observe, that,—

Obs. VI. God is pleased to exercise much patience towards those whom he once grants the mercy and the privilege of his word unto.—He doth not presently proceed against them for and on their barrenness, but stays until the rain hath often fallen upon the ground. But there is an appointed season and period of time, beyond which he will not wait for them any more, as we shall see.

THIRDLY, The distribution of this earth into several parts, with the different lots and events of them, is nextly to be considered. The first sort the apostle describes two ways: 1. By its fruitfulness; 2. By its acceptation with God. And this fruitfulness he further manifests: (1.) From the fruit itself which it bears,—it is "herb," or "herbs;" (2.) From the nature and use of that fruit,—it is "meet for them by whom it is dressed;" (3.) The manner of it,—it "bringeth it forth." These things we must a little open in their order, as they lie in the text: —

1. Τίκτει, it "bringeth forth." Τίκτουσα βοτάνην. This word properly signifies the bringing forth of a woman that hath conceived with child: Συλλήψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ, καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν, Luke 1:31. And so it is constantly used in the New Testament, and not otherwise but only in this place and James 1:15, Ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν. In an elegant similitude, he compareth the work of lust in temptation unto an adulterous conception in the womb of the adulteress, when at length actual sin is brought forth. The seeds of it are cast into the mind and will by temptation; where, after they are warmed, fomented, and cherished, sin, that ugly monster, comes forth into the world. So is this earth said to "bring forth," as a womb that is naturally and kindly impregnated, in its appointed season. And therefore, when the apostle speaks of the other sort, he changeth his expression for such a word as may suit a deformed and monstrous

production. But the native power of the earth, being cherished by the rain that falls on it, brings forth as from a teeming womb the fruits of those seeds it is possessed withal.

Βοτάνην. 2. It "bringeth forth βοτάνην," "generans herbam." The Rhemists render it "grass," causelessly and amiss. The word signifies such "green herbs" as are usually produced by careful culture, tilling, or dressing; such as are for the proper and immediate use of men, and not of their cattle. The same with דֶּשֶׁא, Gen. 1:11,—all sorts of useful green herbs, whether medicinal or for food, or beauty and ornament.

Εὔθετον. 3. The nature of this herbal fruit is, that it is εὐθετος. Some render it by "opportuna," and some by "accommoda;" "meet" answers both. Those that use the former word seem to respect the season wherein it brings forth the fruit. And this is the commendation of it, that it makes no delay, but brings forth in its proper time and season, when its owners and tillers have just ground and reason to expect and look for it. And it is an especial commendation of any thing that beareth fruit; and what is out of season is despised, Ps. 1:3. The latter word intends the usefulness and profitableness of the fruit brought forth, in what season soever it be. We may comprise both senses, and justly suppose both of them to be intended. The Syriac expresseth it by a general word, דְּחָשְׁח, "which is" or "may be of use." And the fruits of the earth are not profitable unless they are seasonable. So James calls it τίμιον καρπὸν τῆς γῆς, "the precious fruit of the earth," which the husbandman waiteth for, until the earth hath received the former and latter rain, James 5:7.

Ἐκείνοις δι᾽ οὓς καὶ γεωργεῖται. 4. Lastly, These herbs thus brought forth are "meet ἐκείνοις δι᾽ οὓς καὶ γεωργεῖται," "unto them by whom it is tilled," or "even by whom;" or "by whom it is also tilled." The particle καί is not superfluous or insignificant. It declares an addition of culture to the rain. For besides the falling of rain on the earth, there is likewise need of further culture, that it may be made fruitful, or bring forth herbs seasonably, which shall be profitable unto men. For if only the rain fall upon it, it will bring forth many things indeed; but if it be not tilled withal, for one useful herb it will bring forth many weeds; as he speaks in the case of husbandry, Virg. Georg. lib. i. 155:—

"Quod nisi et assiduis terram insectabere rastris,
Et sonitu terrebis aves, et ruris opaci
Falce premes umbras, votisque vocaveris imbrem;
Heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum."

Μεταλαμβάνει εὐλογίας ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ. The earth must be tilled, from its nature and the law of its creation, And therefore Adam was to have tilled and wrought the ground in the garden even before the fall, Gen. 2:15. And this is the principal concernment of him that intends to live on the field. The falling of rain upon the earth is common unto the whole. That which gives a field a peculiar relation unto any one is, that he dresseth, and fenceth, and tilleth it. Unto these dressers the herbs that are brought forth are said to be "meet;" they belong unto them, and are useful for them. Δι᾽ οὓς may be rendered "for whom," or "by whom." In the first way, the chief owner of the ground, the lord of the field or vineyard, is signified. The ground is tilled or manured for his use, and he eats of the fruits of it. In the latter sense, those who immediately work about the ground in the tilling of it are intended. But there is no need to distinguish in this place between owner and dresser; for God as he is the great husbandman is both. He is the Lord of the vineyard, it is his, and he dresseth and pruneth the vines, that they may bring forth fruit, John 15:1, 2. Again; the ground, thus made fruitful, "receiveth blessing of God." And the blessing of God with respect unto a fruitful field is twofold,—(1.) Antecedent, in the communication of goodness, or fruit-causing virtue to it. "The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed," Gen. 27:27;—a field that abounds with blossoms, flowers, and fruits, yielding a sweet savour; being so made fruitful by the singular blessing of God. But this is not the blessing here intended; for it is supposed that this field is already made fruitful, so as to bring forth useful herbs; and therefore it must be antecedently interested in this kind of blessing, without which nothing can thrive or prosper. Wherefore, (2.) God's benediction is taken for consequent acceptation or approbation, with care and watchfulness for a further improvement. The blessing of God is at large described, Isa. 27:2, 3. And there are three things included in this blessing of a fruitful field:—(1.) The owning, acceptation, or approbation of it. Such a field God owns, and is not ashamed that it should be looked on as his. And this is opposed to the rejection of the barren ground afterwards mentioned,—"is rejected." (2.) The care, watchfulness, and diligence that are used about it. God watcheth over such a field or vineyard to keep it night and day, that none should hurt it, watering it every moment, and purging the branches of its vines, to make them yet more fruitful;—opposed to "being nigh unto cursing;" that is, wholly neglected, or left unto salt and barrenness. (3.) A final preservation from all evil;—opposed to the burning up of the barren earth, with the thorns and briers that grow upon it.

These things being spoken only of the ground, whence the comparison is taken, the application of them, though not expressed, unto the spiritual things intended is plain and easy. For,—

1. The ground thus dressed, thus bearing fruit, and blessed of God, is true and sound believers. So our Saviour declares it to be in the interpretation of his own parable to this purpose, Matt. 13. They are such as "receive the word of God in good and honest hearts," and bring forth fruits of it in several degrees;—such as, having been ministerially planted and watered, have an increase Wrought in them by the grace of God, 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

2. There is included herein the manner how they bring forth the fruits intended; and that is, that they bring forth in their lives what was before conceived and cherished in their hearts. They have the root in themselves of what they bring forth. So doth the word here used signify, namely, to bring forth the fruit of an inward conception. The doctrine of the gospel, as cast into their hearts, is not only rain, but seed also. This is cherished by grace as precious seed; and, as from a natural root or principle in the heart, brings forth precious fruit. And herein consists the difference between the fruit-bearing of true believers and the works of hypocrites or false professors: These latter bring forth fruits like mushrooms;—they come up suddenly, have ofttimes a great bulk and goodly appearance, but they are only a forced excrescency, they have no natural seed or root in the earth. They do not proceed from a living principle of them in their hearts. The other sort do first conceive, cherish, and foment them in their hearts and minds; whence they bring them forth as from a genuine and natural principle. This is on either side fully declared by our Saviour himself, Luke 6:43–45.

3. There are the herbs or fruits intended. These are they which elsewhere in the Scripture are called "the fruits of the Spirit," "the fruits of righteousness," of "holiness," and the like. All that we do in compliance with the will of God, in the course of our profession and obedience, is of this kind. All effects of faith and love, of mortification and sanctification, that are holy in themselves and useful to others, whereby we express the truth and power of that doctrine of the gospel which we do profess, are the fruits and herbs intended. When our hearts are made holy and our lives useful by the gospel, then are we fruitful.

4. These herbs are said to be "meet for them by whom" (or "for whom") "the earth is dressed." As it is neither useful nor safe to press similitudes beyond their principal scope and intention, and to bring in every minute circumstance into

the comparison; so we must not neglect what is fairly instructive in them, especially if the application of things one to another have countenance and guidance given it in other places of the Scripture, as it is in this case. Wherefore, to clear the application of this part of the similitude, we may observe,—

(1.) That God himself is the great husbandman, John 15:1; and all believers are "God's husbandry," 1 Cor. 3:9. He is so the husbandman as to be the sovereign Lord and Owner of this field or vineyard; and he puts workmen into it to dress it. This our Saviour sets out at large in his parable, Matt. 21:33, etc. Hence he calls his people his "portion," and "the lot of his inheritance," Deut. 32:9. He speaks as though he had given up all the world besides into the possession of others, and kept his people only unto himself. And so he hath, as to the especial blessed relation which he intendeth.

(2.) It is God himself who taketh care for the watering and dressing of this field. He dealeth with it as a man doth with a field that is his own. This he expresseth, Isa. 5:2; Matt. 21:33, 34. The dispensation of the word, and the communication of the Spirit unto the church, with all other means of light, grace, and growth, depend all on his care, and are all supremely from him, as was showed before. To this end he employeth his servants to work and dress it under him, who are "labourers together with God," 1 Cor. 3:9; because they are employed by him, do his work, and have the same end with him.

(3.) This tilling or dressing of the earth, which is superadded to the rain, or the mere preaching of the gospel, denoted thereby, may be referred unto three heads: [1.] The ministerial application of the word unto the souls and consciences of men, in the dispensation of all the ordinances of the gospel. This is the second great end of the ministry, as the dispensation of the word in general, or the rain, is the first. [2.] The administration of the censures and discipline of the church. This belongs unto the dressing and purging of God's vineyard; and of singular use it is unto that end, where it is rightly and duly attended unto. And those who, under pretence hereof, instead of purging the vineyard, endeavour to dig up the vines, will have little thanks from him for their diligence and pains. [3.] Afflictions and trials. By these he purgeth his vine, that it may bring forth yet more fruit; that is, he trieth, exerciseth, and thereby improveth, the faith and graces of believers, 1 Pet. 1:7; Rom. 5:3–5; James 1:2–4.

(4.) God expecteth fruit from this field, which is so his own, and which he so careth for: "I looked for grapes," Isa. 5:2. He sends his servants to receive the fruits of it, Matt. 21:34. Though he stands in no need of us or our goodness,—it

extends not to him, we cannot profit him as a man may profit his neighbour, nor will he grow rich with our substance,—yet he is graciously pleased to esteem the fruits of gospel obedience, the fruits of faith and love, of righteousness and holiness; and by them will he be glorified: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," John 15:8; Matt. 5:16.

(5.) These fruits, when they are brought forth, God approveth of, accepteth, and further blesseth them that bear them; which is the last thing in the words. Some think there is no use of these fruits, unless they are meritorious of grace and glory. But God's acceptation of them here is called his benediction, his blessing of them that bring them forth. Now a blessing cannot be merited; it is an act of bounty and authority, and hath the nature of a free gift, that cannot be deserved. What doth a field merit of him by whom it is watered and tilled, when it bringeth forth herbs meet for his use? they are all but the fruits of his own labour, cost, and pains. The field is only the subject that he hath wrought upon, and it is his own. All the fruits of our obedience are but the effects of his grace in us. We are a subject that he hath graciously been pleased to work upon. Only he is pleased, in a way of infinite condescension, to own in us what is his own, and to pardon what is ours. Wherefore the blessing of God on fruit-bearing believers consists in three things:—[1.] His approbation and gracious acceptance of them. So it is said that "he had respect unto Abel and to his offering," Gen. 4:4. He graciously accepted both of his person and of his sacrifice, owning and approving of him, when Cain and his were rejected. So "he smelled a savour of rest" from the sacrifice of Noah, Gen. 8:21. And to testify his being well pleased therewith, he thence took occasion to renew and establish his covenant with him and his seed. [2.] It is by increasing their fruitfulness. "Every branch" in the vine "that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John 15:2. He "multiplieth the seed that is sown," and "increaseth the fruits of their righteousness," 2 Cor. 9:10. This is the constant way of God in his covenant-dealings with thriving, fruitful Christians; he so blesseth them as that their graces and fruits shall more and more abound, so as that they shall be flourishing even in old age, and bring forth more fruit unto the end. [3.] He blesseth them in the preparation he hath made for to give them an everlasting reward. A reward it is, indeed, of grace and bounty, but it is still a reward, "a recompence of reward." For although it be no way merited or deserved, and although there be no proportion between our works, duties, or fruits, and it, yet, because they shall be owned in it, shall not be lost nor forgotten, and God therein testifies his acceptance of them, it is their reward.

Obs. VII. Where God grants means, there he expects fruit.

Few men consider what is the state of things with them, whilst the gospel is preached unto them. Some utterly disregard it any further than as it is suited unto their carnal interests and advantages; for the gospel is at present so stated in the world, at least in many parts of it, that great multitudes make more benefit by a pretence of it, or what belongs unto it, and have greater secular advancements and advantages thereby, than they could possibly, by the utmost of their diligence and ability in any other way, honest or dishonest, attain unto. These esteem it according to their worldly interests, and for the most part no otherwise; they are merchants of souls, Rev. 18:11–13; 2 Peter 2:3. Some look upon it as that wherein they are really concerned, and they will both take upon themselves the profession of it, and make use of it in their consciences as occasion doth require. But few there are who do seriously consider what is the errand that it comes upon, and what the work is God hath in hand thereby. In brief, he is by it watering, manuring, cultivating the souls of men, that they may bring forth fruit unto his praise and glory. His business by it is to make men holy, humble, self-denying, righteous, useful, upright, pure in heart and life, to abound in good works, or to be like himself in all things. To effect these ends is this holy means suited; and therefore God is justly said to expect these fruits where he grants this means. And if these be not found in us, all the ends of God's husbandry are lost towards us; which what a doleful issue it will have the next verse declares. This, therefore, ought to be always in our minds whilst God is treating with us by the dispensation of the gospel. It is fruit he aims at, it is fruit he looks for: and if we fail herein, the advantage of the whole, both as unto our good and his glory, is utterly lost; which we must unavoidably account for. For this fruit God both expecteth and will require. This is the work and effect of the gospel, Col. 1:6. And the fruit of it is threefold:—1. Of persons, in their conversion unto God, Rom. 15:16. 2. Of real internal holiness in them, or the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22, 23. 3. The outward fruits of righteousness and charity, 2 Cor. 9:10; Phil. 1:11. These God looketh to, Isa. 5:4; Luke 13:7; and he will not always bear with a frustration. A good husbandman will suffer thorns and barren trees to grow in the field; but if a vine or fig-tree be barren in his garden, he will cut it down and cast it into the fire. However, God will not always continue this husbandry, Isa. 28.; Amos 6:12–14.

Obs. VIII. Duties of gospel obedience are fruits meet for God, things that have a proper and especial tendency unto his glory.—As the precious fruits of the earth, which the husbandman waiteth for, are meet for his use,—that is,

such as supply his wants, satisfy his occasions, answer his labour and charge, nourish and enrich him,—so do these duties of gospel obedience answer all the ends of God's glory which he hath designed unto it in the world. "Herein," saith our Saviour, "is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit."

And we must inquire how these fruits are meet for God. For, 1. They are not so, as though he stood in any need of them unto his glory. "Our goodness extendeth not to him," Ps. 16:2. It doth not so, as though he had need of it, or put any value on it for its own sake. Hence he rejected all those multiplied outward services which men trusted unto, as if they obliged him by them; because without them or their services he is the sovereign possessor of all created beings and their effects, Ps. 50:7–12. All thoughts hereof are to be rejected. See Job 22:2, 3, 35:7, 8. 2. They are not meet for God, as if they perfectly answered his law. For with respect thereunto, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," most unmeet to be presented unto him, Isa. 64:6. And if he should mark what is amiss in us or them, who could stand? Ps. 130:3. 3. Much less are they so meet for him, as that by them we should merit any thing at his hand. This foolish presumption is contrary to the very nature of God and man, with that relation between them which necessarily ensues on their very beings. For what can a poor worm of the earth, who is nothing, who hath nothing, who doth nothing that is good, but what it receives wholly from divine grace, favour, and bounty, merit of Him who, from his being and nature, can be under no obligation thereunto, but what is merely from his own sovereign pleasure and goodness?

They are, therefore, no otherwise meet for God but in and through Christ, according to the infinite condescension which he is pleased to exercise in the covenant of grace. Therein doth the Lord Christ, 1. Make our persons accepted, as was that of Abel, through faith in him; which was the foundation of the acceptation of his offering, Gen. 4:4, Heb. 11:4. And this is of grace also; it is "to the praise of his glorious grace, wherein he maketh us accepted in the Beloved," Eph. 1:6. And, 2. He bears and takes away the iniquity that cleaves unto them as they proceed from us, which renders them unmeet for God. This was typed out by the plate of gold, whereon was inscribed "Holiness to the LORD," that was on the forehead of the high priest. It was that he might "bear the iniquity of the holy things" of the people, Exod. 28:36–38. He bare it in the expiation he made of all sin, and takes it away in the sight of God. And, 3. He adds of the incense of his own mediation unto them, that they may have a sweet savour in their

offering to God, Rev. 8:3. On this foundation it is that God hath graciously designed them unto sundry ends of his glory, and accepts them accordingly. For,—

1. The will of his command is fulfilled thereby; and this tends to the glory of his rule and government, Matt. 7:21. We are to pray that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is in heaven. The glory that God hath in heaven, from the ministry of all his holy angels, consists in this, that they always, with all readiness and cheerfulness, do observe his commands and do his will, esteeming their doing so to be their honour and blessedness. For hereby is the rule and authority of God owned, avouched, exalted; a neglect whereof was the sin and ruin of the apostate angels. In like manner our fruits of obedience are the only acknowledgments that we can or do make to the supreme authority and rule of God over us, as the one lawgiver, who hath power to kill and keep alive. The glory of an earthly king consists principally in the willing obedience which his subjects give unto his laws. For hereby they expressly acknowledge that they esteem his laws wise, just, equal, useful to mankind, and also reverence his authority. And it is the glory of God, when the subjects of his kingdom do testify unto all, their willing, cheerful subjection unto all his laws, as holy, righteous, and good, by the fruits of their obedience; as also that it is their principal honour and happiness to be engaged in his service, John 15:14. Hereby is our heavenly Father glorified, as he is our great king and lawgiver.

2. There is in the fruits of obedience an expression of the nature, power, and efficacy of the grace of God, whereby also he is glorified; for he doth all things "to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. 1:6. In all the actings of lust and sin, in the drought and dust of barrenness, we represent an enmity against him, and contrariety unto him, acting over the principle of the first rebellion and apostasy from him. These things, in their own nature, tend greatly to his dishonour, Ezek. 36:20. But these fruits of obedience are all effects of his grace, wherein he "worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And hereby are both the power and nature of that grace manifested and glorified. The power of it, in making fruitful the barren soils of our hearts, which, as under the curse, would of themselves bring forth nothing but thorns and briers. Wherefore, to cause our hearts to abound in the fruits of faith, love, meekness, and all holy, evangelical obedience, is that wherein the power of God's grace is both manifested and magnified, Isa. 11:5–8. And they also declare the nature of God. For they are all of them things good, benign, beautiful, useful to mankind; such as give peace, quietness, and blessedness unto the souls of them

in whom they are; as tend to the restoration of all things in their proper order, and unto the relief of the universe, labouring under its confusion and vanity, Phil. 4:8. Such, I say, are all the fruits of holy obedience in believers; such is their nature and tendency, whereby they declare what that grace is from which they do proceed, and whose effects they are, Tit. 2:11, 12. And hereby is God greatly glorified in the world.

3. They are meet for God, and tend unto his glory, in that they express and manifest the efficacy of the mediation of the Lord Christ, in the obedience of his life and the sacrifice of his death. These he aimed at in them, Tit. 2:14; Eph. 5:25–27. It is in Jesus Christ that God will be glorified. And this is manifested in the effects of his wisdom and love in his mediation. For hereby do we declare and show forth τὰς ἀρετάς, the "virtues of him who hath called us," 1 Pet. 2:9; or the efficacious power of the mediation of Christ, which these fruits are the effects and products of. We do not only declare the excellency and holiness of his doctrine, which teacheth these things, but also the power and efficacy of his blood and intercession, which procure them for us and work them in us. God is glorified hereby, in that some return is made unto his goodness and love. That a creature should make any return unto God, answerable or proportionable unto the effects of his goodness, love, and bounty towards it, is utterly impossible. And yet this men ought to take care about and satisfy, before they talk of a further merit. For what can we properly merit at his hands, whose precedent bounty we come infinitely short of answering or satisfying in all that we can do? But this of fruitfulness in obedience is the way which God hath appointed, whereby we may testify our sense of divine love and goodness, and express our gratitude. And hereby do our fruits of righteousness redound unto the glory of God.

4. God in and by them doth extend his care, goodness, and love unto others. It is his will and pleasure that many who belong unto himself in an especial way, and others also among the community of mankind, should sometimes be cast into, and, it may be, always be in a condition of wants and straits in this world. To take care of them, to provide for them, to relieve them, so as they also may have an especial sense of his goodness, and be instrumental in setting forth his praise, is incumbent on Him who is the great provider for all. Now, one signal way whereby he will do this, is by the fruits of obedience brought forth in others. Their charity, their compassion, their love, their bounty, shall help and relieve them that are in wants, straits, sorrows, poverty, imprisonment, exile, or the like. And so it is in all other cases. Their meekness, their patience, their

forbearance, which are of these fruits, shall be useful unto others, under their weaknesses and temptations. Their zeal, their labour of love in teaching and instructing, or preaching the word, shall be the means of the conviction and conversion of others. So doth it please God, by these fruits of obedience in some, to communicate of his own goodness and love, unto the help, relief, succour, and redress of others. For those so relieved do, or at least ought to look on all as coming directly from God. For it is he who not only commands those who are the means of their conveyance unto them to do what they do, but he directly works it in them by his grace, without which it would not be. And all this redoundeth unto the glory of God. This our apostle expresseth at large, 2 Cor. 9:12–15: "For the administration of this service" (that is, the charitable and bountiful contribution of the Corinthians unto the poor of the church of Jerusalem) "not only supplieth the wants of the saints" themselves (the thought whereof might give great satisfaction to the minds of men benign and compassionate, namely, that they have been able to relieve others), "but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." 'It hath this effect upon the minds of all that are concerned in it, or do know of it, to cause them to abound in thanks and praise unto God.' And he showeth both the grounds whereon and the way whereby this praise is so returned unto God. For,—

(1.) They consider not merely what is done, but the principle from whence it doth proceed: "Whilst by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel." 'This, in the first place, affects them greatly, that whereas before they had only heard it may be a report, that you, or some of you, were converted unto the faith of the gospel, they have now, by "this ministration,"—that is, the relief of bounty communicated unto them, —such an evidence and assurance, that with one consent they give praise and glory to God for the work of his grace towards you.' And, indeed, this usually is the first thing which affects the minds of any of the saints of God, in any relief that God is pleased to hand out unto them by the means of others. They admire and bless God in and for his grace towards them, by whose kindness and compassion they are relieved. So is God glorified by these fruits.

(2.) And the second ground of their praises was, the liberal distribution unto themselves, as they found by experience; and unto "all men," as they were informed and believed. The ministration itself testified their faith and obedience unto the gospel; but the nature of it, that it was liberal and bountiful, evidenced the sincerity and fruitfulness of their faith, or "the exceeding grace of God in them," ver. 14. They saw hereby that there was not an ordinary or

common work only of grace on these Corinthians, engaging them into a common profession, and the duties of it,—which yet was a matter of great thankfulness unto God; but that indeed the grace of God exceedingly abounded in them, which produced these fruits of it in so plentiful a manner. And with respect hereunto also was praise peculiarly rendered unto God. Hereunto also the apostle adds a double way whereby God was glorified, distinct from the direct attribution of praises unto him: "And by their prayer for you, which long after you, for the exceeding grace of God in you." That is, by both these ways they glorified God, both in their prayers for a supply of divine grace and bounty to them by whom they were relieved, and in their inflamed love towards them and longing after them, which was occasioned only by their relief; but the real cause, motive, and object of it, was "the exceeding grace of God in them," which was evidenced thereby. And by both these duties God is greatly glorified. Hence the apostle concludes the whole with that *ἐπινίκιον* of triumphant praise to God, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 'This,' saith he, 'is a gift that cannot be sufficiently declared amongst men, and therefore God is more to be admired in it.' And the apostle presseth the occasion of their joint thankfulness in a word that may include both the grace of God given unto the Corinthians, enabling them to their duty, and the fruit of that grace in the bounty conferred on the poor saints; both of them were the gift of God, and in both of them was he glorified. And in this regard especially are the fruits of our obedience unto the gospel meet for Him by whom we are dressed; that is, have an especial tendency unto the glory of God. Hence is that caution of the apostle, Heb. 13:16: "But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Our prayers and praises also, as he declares in the verse foregoing, are "sacrifices unto God," and accepted with him, verse 15. Our whole obedience is "our reasonable service," is a sacrifice acceptable unto God, Rom. 12:1; yea, but in these fruits of benignity, bounty, charity, doing good, and communicating largely and liberally, God is in a peculiar manner well pleased and satisfied, as smelling a savour of rest through Christ in such sacrifices.

And I might here justly take occasion at large to press men unto an abundant fruitfulness in this especial kind of fruit-bearing, but that the nature of our discourse will not admit it.

5. They are meet for God, because they are as the first-fruits unto him from the creation. When God took and rescued the land of Canaan, which he made his own in a peculiar manner, out of the hands of his adversaries, and gave it unto his own people to possess and inherit, he required of them, that, on their

first entrance thereinto, they should come and present him with the "first of all the fruits of the earth," as an acknowledgment of his right to the land, and his bounty unto them, Deut. 26:1–8, etc. The whole creation did by sin as it were go out of the possession of God;—not of his right and power, but of his love and favour: Satan became the "god of this world," and the whole of it lay under the power of evil. By Jesus Christ he rescueth it again from its slavery and bondage unto Satan. But this he will not do all at once, only he will have some first-fruits offered unto him as an acknowledgment of his right, and as a pledge of his entering on the possession of the whole. And God is greatly glorified in the presenting of these first-fruits, at the recovery of the creation unto himself, which is a certain pledge of vindicating the whole from its present bondage. And it is believers that are these first-fruits unto God: James 1:18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." But we are not so but in our fruitfulness. Thereby it is that there is a revenue of glory and praise returned unto God from this lower part of the creation; without which it bears nothing but thorns and briers in his sight. In these, therefore, and the like things, consists the meetness of our fruits of obedience unto God, or his glory. Again,—

Obs. IX. Wherever there are any sincere fruits of faith and obedience found in the hearts and lives of professors, God graciously accepts and blesseth them.

Nothing is so small but that, if it be sincere, he will accept; and nothing so great but he hath an overflowing reward for it. Nothing shall be lost that is done for God;—a cup of cold water, the least refreshment given unto any for his sake, shall be had in remembrance. All we have and are is antecedently due to him, so as that there can be no merit in any thing we do; but we must take heed lest, whilst we deny the pride of merit, we lose the comfort of faith as to acceptance of our duties. It is the fruit of the mediation of Jesus Christ, that we may "serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness all our days;" but if we are always anxious and solicitous about what we do, whether it be accepted with God or no, how do we serve him without fear? This is the worst kind of fear we are obnoxious unto, most dishonourable unto God and discouraging unto our own souls, 1 John 4:18. For how can we dishonour God more than by judging that when we do our utmost in sincerity in the way of his service, yet he is not well pleased with us, nor doth accept of our obedience? Is not this to suppose him severe, angry, always displeased, ready to take advantage, one whom nothing will satisfy? Such thoughts are the marks of the wicked servant in the parable, Luke 19:20–22. Where, then, is that infinite goodness, grace,

condescension, love, compassion, which are so essential to his nature, and which he hath declared himself so to abound in? And if it be so, what use is there of the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ? what benefit in the promises of the covenant? and what is there remaining that can encourage us in and unto duties of obedience? Merely to perform them because we cannot, we dare not do otherwise, a servile compliance with our conviction, is neither acceptable unto God nor any ways comfortable unto our own souls. Who would willingly lead such a life in this world, to be always labouring and endeavouring, without the least satisfaction that what he does will either please them by whom he is set on work, or any way turn to his own account? Yet such a life do men lead who are not persuaded that God graciously accepts of what they sincerely perform. A suspicion to the contrary riseth up in opposition unto the fundamental principle of all religion: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. 11:6.

This is the first principle and foundation of all religious worship; which if it be not well and firmly laid in our hearts, all our supplication will be in vain. Now unless we do believe that he doth accept and bless our duties, we cannot believe that he is such a rewarder, or, as he expressed it in the covenant with Abraham, an "exceeding great reward." But he hath descended to the lowest instances, of a little goat's hair to the tabernacle, a mite into the treasury, a cup of water to a disciple, to assure us that he despiseth not the meanest of our sincere services. But this must be spoken unto again on verse 10, and therefore I shall not here further confirm it.

Some perhaps will say, 'that their best fruits are so corrupted, their best duties so defiled, that they cannot see how they can find acceptance with so holy a God. Every thing that proceeds from them is so weak and infirm, that they fear they shall suffer loss in all.' And this very apprehension deprives them of all that consolation in the Lord which they might take in a course of holy obedience. I answer, 1. This consideration, of the defilements of sin that adhere to the best of our works or duties, excludes all merit whatever. And it is right it should do so; for indeed that cursed notion of the merit of good works hath been the most pernicious engine for the ruin of men's souls that ever Satan made use of. For on the one hand many have been so swollen and puffed up with it, as that they would not deign in any thing to be beholden to the grace of God, but have thought heaven and glory as due to them for their works as hell is to other men for their sin, or the wages of a hireling to him for his labour, which cries to heaven against the injustice of them that detain it. Hence a total neglect of

Christ hath ensued. Others, convinced of the pride and folly of this presumption, and notwithstanding the encouragement unto fruitful obedience which lies in God's gracious acceptation and rewarding of our duties, have been discouraged in their attendance unto them. It is well, therefore, where this notion is utterly discarded by the consideration of the sinful imperfection of our best duties: so it is done by the church, Isa. 64:6; Rom. 7:21. 2. This consideration excludes all hope or expectation of acceptance with God upon the account of strict justice. If we consider God only as a judge pronouncing sentence concerning us and our duties according to the law, neither we nor any thing we do can either be accepted with him or approved by him. For as the psalmist says concerning our persons, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" and prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified:" so it is with respect unto all our works and duties of obedience; not any one of them can endure the trial of God as judging by the law, but would appear as a filthy thing. Whilst, therefore, persons are only under the power of their convictions, and are not able by faith to take another view of God and his dealings with them but by the law, it is impossible that they should have any comfortable expectation of the approbation of their obedience.

Wherefore, that we may be persuaded of the gracious acceptation of all our duties, even the least and meanest that we do in sincerity and with a single eye to the glory of God, and that our labour in the Lord should not be lost, we are always to have two things in the eye and view of our faith: 1. The tenor of the covenant wherein we walk with God. God hath abolished and taken away the covenant of works by substituting a new one in the room thereof. And the reason why he did so, was because of a double insufficiency in the law of that covenant unto his great end of glorifying himself in the salvation of sinners. For, (1.) It could not expiate and take away sin; which must be done indispensably, or that end could not be obtained. This our apostle asserts as one reason of it, Rom. 8:3; and proves at large in this epistle afterwards. (2.) Because it neither did nor could approve of such an obedience as poor sanctified sinners were able to yield unto God; for it required perfection, when the best which they can attain unto in this life is but sincerity. What then? do we make void the law by faith? doth not God require perfect righteousness of us,—the righteousness which the law originally prescribed? Yes, he doth so; and without it the curse of the law will come upon all men whatever: but this also being that which in ourselves we can never attain unto, is provided for in the new covenant

by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto them that do believe. So the apostle expressly states the matter, Rom. 10:3–6. On this supposition, God in this covenant hath provided for the acceptance of sincere though imperfect obedience, which the law had no respect unto. The sum is, that his acceptance now shall be suited unto the operation of his grace. He will crown and reward all the actings of his own grace in us. Whatever duty, therefore, is principled by grace and done in sincerity, is accepted with God, according to the tenor of this covenant. This, therefore, we are always to eye and consider as the bottom of the acceptance of our imperfect, weak, unworthy services. 2. Unto the same end is the mediation of Christ to be considered in an especial manner. Without respect unto him, neither we nor any thing we do is approved of God. And a double regard is in this matter always to be had unto him and his mediation:—(1.) That by one sacrifice he takes away all that is evil or sinful in our duties; whatever is of real defilement, disorder, self in them, whereby any guilt might be contracted, or is so, he hath borne it and taken it, as unto its legal guilt, all away. Whatever, therefore, of guilt doth unavoidably adhere unto or accompany our duties, we may by faith look upon it as so removed out of the way by the sacrifice and mediation of Christ, as that it shall be no hinderance or obstruction to the gracious acceptation of them. (2.) Whereas all that we do, when we have used our utmost endeavours, by the assistance of grace, and setting aside the consideration of what is evil and sinful from the principle of corrupted nature remaining in us, is yet so weak and imperfect, and will be so whilst we are but dust and ashes dwelling in tabernacles of clay, as that we cannot apprehend how the goodness which is in our obedience should extend itself to God, reach unto the throne of his holiness, or be regarded by him, the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ doth so make way for them, put such a value on them in the sight of God, as that they receive approbation and blessing from him; for in Jesus Christ we are complete, and God makes both us and our duties accepted in the Beloved. The consideration hereof, added to the former, may firmly assure the mind and conscience of every true believer concerning the gracious acceptation of the least of their holy duties that are performed in sincerity. And this they have in such a way as, (1.) To exclude merit and boasting; (2.) To keep them in a holy admiration of God's grace and condescension; (3.) To make them continually thankful for Christ and his mediation; (4.) To yield unto themselves comfort in their duties and encouragement unto them.

Ver. 8.—"But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

In the foregoing verse the apostle showed how it would be and fall out with that part of the Judaical church which embraced the gospel, and brought forth the fruits of faith and obedience. God would accept of them, own them, preserve and bless them. And this blessing of God consisted in four things: 1. In his gracious acceptance of them in Christ, and the approbation of their obedience, verse 10. 2. In delivering them from that dreadful curse and judgment which not long after consumed the whole remainder of that people. 3. In making use of multitudes of them to be the means of communicating the knowledge and grace of the gospel unto other persons and nations;—a greater blessing and honour than which they could not in this world be made partakers of. 4. In their eternal salvation. This being laid down, he proceeds in his parable to declare the state and condition of the other sort of them, namely, of unbelievers, apostates from, and opposers of the gospel. And this he doth in compliance with the symbolical action of our Saviour in cursing the barren fig-tree, whereby the same thing was represented, Matt. 21:19; for it was the apostate, persecuting, unbelieving church of the Jews, their estate, and what would become of them, which our Saviour intended to expose in that fig-tree. He had now almost finished his ministry among them, and seeing they brought forth no fruit thereon, he intimates that the curse was coming on them, whose principal effect would be perpetual barrenness. They would not before bear any fruit, and they shall not hereafter; being hardened, by the just judgment of God, unto their everlasting ruin. So was fulfilled what was long before foretold, Isa. 6:9, 10, as our apostle declares, Acts 28:26, 27. In answer hereunto, our apostle in this verse gives this account of their barrenness, and description of their end, through God's cursing and destroying of them. And herein also the estate and condition of all apostates, unfruitful professors, hypocrites, and unbelievers, to whom the gospel hath been dispensed, is declared and expressed.

And, as it was necessary unto his design, the apostle pursues his former similitude, making an application of it unto this sort of men. And, 1. He supposeth them to be "earth," as the other sort are,—ἐκφέρουσα; that is, ἡ γὴ ἡ ἐκφέρουσα, "that earth," that part of the earth. So it is, and no more. It is neither better nor worse than that which proves fruitful and is blessed. All men to whom the gospel is preached are every way by nature in the same state and condition. All the difference between them is made by the gospel itself. None of them have any reason to boast, nor do they in any thing make themselves differ

from others. 2. It is supposed that the rain falls often on this ground also. Those who live unprofitably under the means of grace have ofttimes the preaching of the word as plentifully, and as long continued unto them, as they that are most thriving and fruitful in obedience. And herein lies no small evidence that these things will be called over again another day, to the glory of God's grace and righteousness. On these suppositions, two things are considerable in what is ascribed unto this earth: 1. What it brings forth; 2. How.

Ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους. 1. It bringeth forth ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους, "thorns and briers." See the opening of the words before. In general, I doubt not but all sorts of sins are hereby intended, all "unfruitful works of darkness," Rom. 6:21, Eph. 5:11. And the principal reason why they are here compared unto thorns and briers, is with respect unto the curse that came on the earth by sin: "Cursed is the ground, ... thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee," Gen. 3:17, 18; whereunto barrenness, or unaptness for better fruits, is added, Gen. 4:12. From this curse, the earth of itself, and untilled, would bring forth nothing but thorns and briers, at least they would be absolutely prevalent in and over all the products of it; so the heart of man by nature is wholly overrun with evil, sinful imaginations, and his life with vicious, sinful actions, Gen. 6:5, Rom. 3:10–18. Wherefore the bringing forth of thorns and briers, is abounding in such actings and works as proceed from the principle of corrupted nature under the curse. In opposition hereunto, all good actions, all acts of faith and obedience, are called "herbs" and "fruit," because they are "the fruits of the Spirit;" and such sinful works are compared to, and called "thorns and briers," from a community of properties with them. For, (1.) They are in their kind unprofitable, things of no use, but meet to be cast out, that room may be made for better. When a man hath a field overgrown with thorns and briers, he finds he hath no benefit by them; wherefore he resolves to dig them up or burn them. Of such and no other use are the sins of men in the world. All the "works of darkness" are "unfruitful," Eph. 5:11. The world is no way benefited by them: never was any man the better for his own or another man's sins. (2.) Because they are hurtful and noxious, choking and hindering good fruits that otherwise would thrive in the field. So are thorns and briers represented in the Scripture as grieving, piercing, and hurtful; and things that are so called by their name, Ezek. 28:24; Micah 7:4; Isa. 7:25. Such are all the sins of men. All the confusion, disorders, devastations that are in the world, are from them alone. In general, therefore, it is all sorts of sins, "works of darkness," "works of the flesh," that are intended by these "thorns and briers." But yet I presume that the apostle hath regard unto the sins which

the obstinate Jews were then in an especial manner guilty of, and which would be the cause of their sudden destruction. Now those, as it appeareth from this whole epistle and matter of fact in the story, were unbelief, impenitency, and apostasy. The thorns and briers, which were the fuel wherein was kindled the fire of God's indignation unto their consumption, were their sins against the gospel. Either they would not give their assent unto its truth, or would not amend their lives according to its doctrine, or would not abide with constancy in its profession. These are the especial sins which cast those Hebrews, and will cast all that are like unto them, into the condition of danger and perdition here described.

Ἐκφίρουσα. 2. The manner of bringing forth these thorns and briers is expressed by ἐκφέρουσα. Chrysostom puts a great mark upon the difference of the words used by the apostle. That which he applieth to the production of good fruits is τίκτουσα, which denotes a natural conception and production of any thing in due order, time, and season; but this ἐκφέρουσα, applied to the barren, cursed ground, denotes a casting of them out in abundance, not only without the use of means, but against it. The heart of man needs not to be impregnated with any adventitious seed, to make it thrust forth all sorts of sins, or to make it fruitful in unbelief and impenitency: the womb of sin will of its own accord be continually teeming with these things.

Matters being thus stated with this ground, the apostle affirms three things concerning it:—

Ἀδόκιμος. 1. It is ἀδόκιμος. That is said to be ἀδόκιμον, whereof trial hath been made whether, by the application of suitable means unto it, it will be made useful unto any certain end. Δοκιμάζω is "to try," to make an experiment what any thing is, and of what use; especially it is applied to the trial that is made of gold and silver by fire. Τό χρυσίον ἐν πυρὶ δοκιμάζομεν, Isocrat.; "We try gold in the fire,"—that is, whether it be true and pure. Fire is the great trier and discoverer of metals, of what sort they are, 1 Cor. 3:13–15. And hence the Lord Christ, in the trial of his church, is compared to a refiner with fire, Mal. 3:2. So faith is tried, 1 Pet. 1:7. And it is the word which our apostle useth when he enjoins us to try and search ourselves as unto our sincerity in faith and obedience, 2 Cor. 13:5, Gal. 6:4;—as also to make a due inquiry into the true nature of spiritual things, Rom. 12:2, Eph. 5:10; not contenting ourselves with a bare notion of them, but endeavouring after an experience of their power in our own hearts. Δοκιμή is often used by our apostle for "an experience upon trial," Rom. 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:9; Phil. 2:22: as δοκίμιον by Peter, 1 Epist. 1:7. Hence is δόκιμος,

"one that upon trial is approved, found sound, and therefore, is accepted," 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Cor. 10:18; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:12. Εὐάρεστος τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, Rom. 14:18;—"Accepted with God, and approved with men." Hence ἀδόκιμος is "one rejected, disapproved upon trial, reprobate," 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 13:5, 6; Tit. 1:16. The whole is expressed, Jer. 6:29, 30: "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain.... Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them." All means were used to try to the utmost whether there were any true, sincere metal in them. After all, they were found ἀργύριον ἀδόκιμον, "refuse silver," mere dross; which was therefore rejected, as of no use. This ground, therefore, is supposed to have had a trial made of it, and all proper means to have been used for to make it fruitful; but whereas nothing succeeded, it is to be ἀδόκιμος, "rejected," "disapproved," laid aside as to any further endeavours to make it successful. Such a piece of ground the husbandman leaves caring for; he will lay out no more charges about it nor take any more pains with it, for he finds on trial that it is incurable.

Κατάρας ἐγγύς. 2. It is said to be κατάρας ἐγγύς, "nigh unto a curse." The husbandman doth not presently destroy such a piece of ground, but neglecting of it, lets it lie, further to discover its own barrenness and unprofitableness. But this he doth so as to declare his resolution to lay it waste, and so to cast it out of the bounds of his possession. And he doth it in three ways:—(1.) By gathering out of it all the good plants and herbs that yet remain in it, and transplanting them into a better soil. (2.) By casting down its fences and laying it waste, that all the beasts of the field shall lodge in it and prey upon it. (3.) By withholding all means of doing it good, by watering or manuring of it. And hereby it becomes like to the barren wilderness as it lies under the curse, which no man careth for. It is nigh to that condition wherein it shall not be known that it was ever owned by him, or did ever belong unto his possession. So is it unto cursing. For as blessing of any thing is an addition of good, so cursing implies the taking off all kindness and all effects thereof, and therewithal the devoting of it unto destruction.

Ἧς τὸ τέλος εἰς καῦσιν. 3. Lastly, It is added, ἧς τὸ τέλος εἰς καῦσιν, "whose end is unto burning," or "to be burned." Fire makes a total and dreadful destruction of all combustible things whereunto it is applied. Hence such desolations are said to be firing or burning, by what means soever they are effected. Things are

consumed, as if they were burned up with fire. There is a burning of ground which is used to make it fruitful, as the poet expresseth it in his Georgics, lib. i. 84:—

"Sæpe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros,

Atque levem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis."

But it is a burning of another kind that is here intended. And this is an act of positive indignation. He will not only show his dissatisfaction in such barren ground by a neglect of it, but his vengeance in its destruction. And it is thus expressed, to intimate both the temporal destruction of the obstinate Jews, and the eternal destruction of all unbelievers,—both by fire of several kinds.

Thus, therefore, the apostle declares that God, the great husbandman and owner of the vineyard, would deal with the impenitent and incredulous Hebrews.

1. He tried them, and that for a long season, by the preaching of the gospel. The rain fell oft upon them, and that for the space now of thirty-six years, or thereabouts. God did, as it were, essay by outward means to make them fruitful, to bring them to faith, repentance, and obedience. But after this long trial, it appeared that they multiplied, as it were, under his hand the thorns and briers of their unbelief, and all sorts of provoking sins. Wherefore God rejects them, declares that his soul had no pleasure in them,—that he would be at no further cost about them. And twice did our apostle mind his countrymen in other places that God would speedily so deal with them, Acts 13:40, 41, 46, 28:25–28; as our Saviour had often threatened them that the kingdom of God should be taken from them,—they should no longer enjoy the means of saving knowledge or repentance. God laid them aside, as a field no longer fit to be tilled. And this he did about the [time of the] writing of this epistle; for immediately hereon he began utterly to forsake them who were obstinate in their Judaism, and all those who apostatized thereunto from Christianity. And thus also, in proportion, he deals with all other unprofitable hearers and apostates. There is a time after which he casts them out of his care, will feed them no more, provide no more that they be rained on or dressed. And if they do any more enjoy the word, it is by accident, for the sake of some who are approved; but they shall receive no advantage by it, seeing they are no longer "God's husbandry."

2. On this rejection of them, they were "nigh unto cursing;" that is, they were so ordered and disposed of as that the destroying curse of God might come upon them. God had now anathematized them, or devoted them to destruction; and hereupon he gave them up unto all those ways and means whereby it might be hastened and infallibly overtake them. For, (1.) He gathered all the good plants from amongst them; he called out and separated from them all true believers, and planted them in the Christian church. So he deals with all apostate churches before their utter destruction, Rev. 18:4. (2.) He took away their fences, casting them out of his protection, insomuch that when they were destroyed, the general of the Roman army acknowledged that God had infatuated them, so that their impregnable holds and forts were of no use unto them. (3.) He granted them no more use of means for their conversion. Thenceforward they fell into all manner of sins, confusions, disorders, tumults; which occasioned their ruin. After the same manner will God deal with any other people whom he rejects for their rejection of the gospel. And the world hath no small reason to tremble at the apprehension of such a condition at this day.

3. In the end, this whole barren earth was burned up. In the first place, this respects the destruction of Jerusalem, which ensued not long after, when temple and city, and people and country, were all devoured by fire and sword, Matt. 24:1, 2. But yet this, like the destruction of Sodom, was but an emblem of the future judgment. Hypocrites, unbelievers, apostates, are to have another end than what they fall into in this world. An end they shall have wherein their eternal condition shall be immutably stated. And this end that they must have is to the fire, the "fire prepared for the devil and his angels." They shall be gathered together and burned with a fire that shall never be quenched, John 15:6. And this final destruction of all unprofitable hearers, unbelievers, and apostates, is that which is principally intended in the words. And we must not let this wholesome admonition pass without some observations from it.

Obs. I. Whilst the gospel is preached unto men, they are under their great trial for eternity.

The application that is made unto them is for an experiment how they will prove. If they acquit themselves in faith and obedience, they receive the blessing of eternal life from God. If they prove barren and unprofitable, they are rejected of God, and cursed by him. Nor shall they ever have any other trial, nor shall ever any other experiment be made of them, Heb. 10. Their season of the enjoyment of the gospeluis their "day." When that is past, "the night cometh"

on them, wherein they cannot work. When these "bellows are burned, and the lead is consumed, the founder melting in vain," men are rejected as "reprobate silver," never to be tried any more. Men do but deceive themselves in their reserve of a purgatory when they are gone out of this world. If they are cast under their trial here, so they must abide to eternity. And we may do well to consider these things distinctly, because our concernment in them is very great. To this purpose observe,—

1. That we are all made for an eternal state and condition, in blessedness or woe. Men may live like beasts, and therefore wish that they might die like them also; but we are all made with another design, and must all of us "stand in our" eternal "lot at the end of the days," Dan. 12:13.

2. That the unchangeable determination of our eternal state depends on what we do in this life. There is neither wisdom nor knowledge, duty nor obedience, in the grave, whither we are going. As the tree falls so it must lie. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that is the judgment." Nothing interposeth to alter our state and condition between death and judgment. The contrivance of purgatory when we are gone hence was an invention of Satan, to delude the souls of men with hopes of relief when all means and ways of it were past and irrecoverable.

3. The trial of our future state is made by the preaching of the gospel unto us, and our compliance with it or rejection of it. This is that which the text declares on the one hand and the other; the barren ground is rejected on this trial.

4. It was a fruit of infinite grace, condescension, and mercy, to grant a new trial unto sinners under the curse we had all cast ourselves into. There God might have left us. So he dealt with the sinning angels, whom he spared not. And had he dealt so with all mankind, who could say unto him, "What doest thou?" And it is that which we must all answer for, namely, that when we were lost and fallen under the sentence of the holy and righteous law, God would propose any terms of peace and reconciliation unto us, and give us a second trial thereon.

5. That the especial way of this trial doth most eminently set out this grace and mercy. A way it is full of infinite wisdom, goodness, love, mercy, and grace; such as wherein all the divine perfections will be eternally glorified, whether it be accepted or refused.

6. When the gospel is preached unto any, God telleth sinners that although they have destroyed themselves, and are ready every moment to sink into eternal misery, yet he will, out of infinite grace and compassion, try them once more, and that by the holy terms of the gospel. And in the preaching of the word he doth it accordingly. And although the season of this trial be determined with God, yet it is unto us uncertain, on many accounts. For, (1.) The continuance of our lives, during which alone we are capable of enjoying it, is so. (2.) We see that the preaching of the gospel is so also. The Lord Christ doth ofttimes remove the candlestick whilst they continue alive in the world among whom it was once fixed. And, (3.) There is a time when a period is put unto the efficacy of the word for the conversion of some, although the outward dispensation be continued unto them, Isa. 6:9, 10. Wherefore the present season and present enjoyment of the gospel it is our duty to consider and improve. For what is the work that therein God hath in hand towards us? Is it not to give us our trial, in the use of means, as to what shall be our future condition? He hath therein undertaken us as his vineyard, as his husbandry, and causeth the rain to fall upon us; and hath done so often and long. And who almost doth consider aright how great his concernment is herein? Would men be so careless, negligent, formal, slothful, as they are for the most part under the hearing of the word, if they duly remembered that it is their trial for eternity? and they know not how soon it may be over. If we lose this season, we are gone for ever. It is, therefore, our wisdom to know whether our fruitfulness, in faith, repentance, and obedience, do answer the rain and dressing we have had by the dispensation of the word. The axe is laid at the root of the tree;—if we bring not forth good fruit we shall ere long be hewed down and cast into the fire. It is true, there is none of us do answer as we ought the love and care of God towards us herein; nor can we so do. When we have done our utmost, we are but unprofitable servants. But there is a wide difference between a defect in degrees of obedience, and the neglect of the whole. Where the first is, we ought to walk humbly in the sense of it, and labour after more perfection. And if this defect be great and notable, such as is occasioned by our lusts indulged unto, or by sloth and negligence, as we can have no evidence of our being approved of God, so it is high time to recover ourselves, by new diligence and holy endeavours, or we may be cast in our trial. But where the latter is, where men bring forth no "fruit meet for repentance," what can they expect but to be finally and totally rejected of God? Whereas, therefore, we have been long most of us under this trial, it is assuredly high time that we call ourselves unto a strict account with respect unto

it. And if, upon inquiry, we find ourselves at a loss which sort of ground we do belong unto, because of our barrenness and leanness, unless we are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, we will give ourselves no rest until we have better evidences of our fruit-bearing. We may do well to remember, that though the earth on which the rain falls is here distributed by the apostle into two sorts, like Jeremiah's figs, very good and very bad, to one of which every one at last must be joined; yet, as to present effects and appearances, the ground whereinto the seed of the gospel is cast is distributed by our Saviour into four sorts, whereof one only brings forth fruit meet for Him by whom it is dressed, Matt. 13. There are several ways whereby we may miscarry under our trial; one only whereby we may be accepted, namely, fruitfulness of heart and life.

Obs. II. Barrenness under the dispensation of the gospel is always accompanied with an increase of sin.

The ground which brings not forth "herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed," thrusts forth "thorns and briers." Let it be observed, that spiritual barrenness never goes alone. Abounding in sin will accompany it, and doth so. It may be it doth not so openly and visibly for a season; but all things will tend thereunto, and at last it will discover itself. Yea, there are no sinners like them, nor sin like theirs, by whom the means of grace are rejected, or not improved. The first generation of great provoking sinners were those of the old world before the flood. Unto these Noah had been a "preacher of righteousness," 2 Pet 2:5. In his ministry did the Spirit of Christ "strive with them," until God affirmed he should do so no more, Gen. 6:3. But they were disobedient and barren, 1 Pet. 3:19, 20. And this issued in those provoking sins which God could not bear withal, but "brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly." The next was these Hebrews, unto whom the gospel had been preached. And they proved a generation no less wicked than that before the flood, insomuch as their own historian affirms that he verily believed that "if the Romans had not come and destroyed them, God would have poured fire and brimstone on them from heaven, as he did upon Sodom." And the third generation of the same kind are the apostate Christian churches, whose condition and state is described in the Revelation. This is the issue of barrenness under God's culture and watering; and it will be so. For,—

1. When men have rejected the last means of their spiritual healing and restraint of sin, what can be expected from them but an outrage in sinning? There are three ways whereby God puts a restraint upon sin. The first is by the light of a natural conscience. This is born with men in the principle of it, and

grows into exercise in the improvement of reason. And where the natural workings of it are not prevented and suffocated by the horrible example of parents and relations living in cursing, lying, and all manner of profaneness, it is very useful in youth, to restrain persons from sundry sins. It is so, I say, until corruptions getting strength, and temptations abounding, custom in sinning takes away the edge of it, and weakens it in its operation. Wherefore,—

2. When this restraint is broken through, God sets up the hedge of the law before the minds of men, to deter them from sin. And this also hath a great efficacy with many unto this end, at least for a season. But neither will mere conviction from the law always give bounds unto the lusts of men. Wherefore, —

3. The gospel comes with a different design from them both. The utmost of their aim and work is but to restrain sin, but the gospel comes to convert the sinner. Their work is to set a dam before the streams of sin; that of the gospel is to dry up the spring. But if this also, as it is in this case, be rejected and despised, what remains to set any bounds unto the lusts of men?

1. They will find themselves at liberty to act their own inclinations to the utmost, as having cast off all regard to God in all the ways whereby he hath revealed himself. Hence you may find more honesty and uprightness, a more conscientious abstinence from sin, wrongs, and injuries, more effects of moral virtue, among heathens and Mohammedans, than among professed Christians, or persons who, being unprofitable under the gospel, do thereby tacitly reject it. No fields in the world are fuller of thorns and briers, than those of people, nations, churches, who profess themselves to be Christians and are not. Suppose two fields equally barren; let one of them be tilled and dressed, and the other be let alone, left unto its own state and condition: when the field that hath been tilled shall be forsaken for its barrenness, trash of all sorts, incomparably above that which was never tilled, will rise up in it. This is that which at this day is such a scandal to Christianity, which hath broken up the flood-gates of atheism and let in a deluge of profaneness on the world. No sinners like unto barren Christians. Heathens would blush, and infidels stand astonished, at the things they practise in the light of the sun. There was sleeping in the bed of uncleanness, and drunkenness, among the heathens: but our apostle, who well enough knew their course, affirms of them, that "they who sleep, sleep in the night; and they who are drunken, are drunken in the night," 1 Thess. 5:7. They did their shameful things in darkness and in secret, Eph. 5:11, 12. But, alas! among Christians who have directly and wilfully despised the healing power

and virtue of the gospel, these are works of the day, proclaimed as in Sodom, and the perpetration of them is the business of men's lives. If you would see the greatest representation of hell upon the earth, go into an apostate church, or to persons that have had the word preached unto them, or have heard of it sufficiently for their conviction, but are not healed. The face of all things in Christianity at this day is on this account dreadful and terrible, and bespeaks desolation to lie at the door. The ground whereunto the waters of the sanctuary do come, and it is not healed, is left unto salt and barrenness for ever.

2. It is a righteous thing with God judicially to give up such persons unto all manner of filthy sins and wickedness, that it may be an aggravation of their condemnation at the last day. It is the way of God to do so even when inferior manifestations of himself, his word and will, are rejected, or not improved. So he dealt with the Gentiles for their abuse of the light of nature, with the revelation made of him by the works of creation and providence, Rom. 1:24, 26, 28. And shall not we think that he will, that he doth so deal with persons, upon their unprofitableness under and rejection of the highest and most glorious revelation of himself that ever he did make, or ever will in this world, unto any of the sons of men? It may be asked, 'How doth God thus judicially give up persons despising the gospel unto their own hearts' lusts, to do the things that are not convenient?' I answer, He doth it, (1.) By leaving them wholly to themselves, taking off all effectual restraint from them. So spake our blessed Saviour of the Pharisees: "Let them alone," saith he; "they are blind leaders of the blind," Matt. 15:14. 'Reprove them not, help them not, hinder them not; let them alone to take their own course.' So saith God of Israel, now given up to sin and ruin, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone," Hos. 4:17; Ezek. 3:27. And it is the same judgment which he denounceth against unprofitable hearers of the gospel: Rev. 22:11, "He which is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." 'Go on now in your sins and filthiness without restraint.' Now, when men are thus left unto themselves,—as there is a time when God will so leave gospel despisers, that he will lay no more restraint upon them, but withhold the influence of all consideration that should give them any effectual check or control,—it were not to be conceived what an outrage and excess of sin the cursed, corrupted nature of man will run out into, but that the world is filled with the fruits and tokens of it. And God doth righteously thus withdraw himself more absolutely from gospel despisers than he doth from pagans and infidels, whom, by various actings of his providence, he keeps within bounds of sinning subservient unto his holy ends. (2.) God pours out upon such

persons "a spirit of slumber," or gives them up to a profound security, so as that they take notice of nothing in the works or word of God that should stir them up to amendment, or restrain them from sin. So he dealt with these unbelieving Jews: Rom. 11:8, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see." Although it be so come to pass, that many there are whom God's soul loatheth, and they abhor him also, as he speaks, Zech. 11:8, so that he will have no more to do with them; yet he doth and will continue his word in the world, and the works of his providence in the government thereof. Now, as in the word there are several warnings and dreadful threatenings against sinners, so in the works of God there are judgments full of evidences of God's displeasure against sin, Rom. 1:18. Both these in their own nature are suited to awaken men, to bring them to a due consideration of themselves, and so to restrain them from sin. But as to this sort of persons, God sends a spirit of slumber upon them, that nothing shall rouse them up, or awaken them from their sins. Though it thunders over their heads, and the tempest of judgments falls so near them, as if they were personally concerned, yet do they cry, "Peace, peace." When the word is preached to them, or they hear by any means the curse of the law, yet they bless themselves, as those who are altogether unconcerned in it. God gives them up unto all ways and means whereby they may be fortified in their security. Love of sin; contempt and scorn of them by whom the word of God is declared, or the judgments of God are dreaded; carnal confidence, carrying towards atheism; the society of other presumptuous sinners, strengthening their hands in their abominations; a present supply for their lusts, in the pleasant things of this world,—I mean which are so to the flesh; shall all of them contribute to their security. (3.) God absolutely and irrecoverably gives them up to extreme obstinacy, to final hardness and impenitency, Isa. 6:9, 10. This is no place to treat of the nature of divine induration. It is enough to observe at present, that where provoking sinners do fall under it, they are totally blinded and hardened in sin unto their eternal ruin. Now, when God doth thus deal with men who will not, and because they will not be healed and reformed by the preaching of the gospel, can any thing else ensue but that they will give up themselves unto all wickedness and filthiness with delight and greediness? And this wrath seems to be come upon multitudes in the world unto the utmost. So the apostle describes this condition in the Jews when they were under it, 1 Thess. 2:15, 16: "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they

might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." And they are even blind themselves who see not this to be the condition of many in the world at this day.

3. There are especial sins that are peculiar to this sort of barren persons, and so also aggravations of sins that others contract not the guilt of. Now this state and condition, at least the utmost and highest danger of it, is so written on the foreheads of most that are called Christians in the world, that there is no need of making any application of it unto them. And although it be not for us to know times and seasons, or to set bounds and limits to the patience of Christ, yet have we just reason to dread the speedy breaking forth of his severity in judgment, spiritual or temporal, upon most nations and churches that are called by his name. But the duty it is of those who make profession of the gospel in a peculiar manner, to inquire diligently whether there be not growing in their own hearts and ways any such sins as are usually consequent unto barrenness under the word. If it prove so upon search, they may justly fear that God is beginning to revenge upon them the neglect of the gospel, and unprofitableness under it. There are degrees of this sin and its consequents, as we shall show afterwards; and the evidences and effects of God's displeasure against it are progressive and gradual also. From some of these the sinner is recoverable by grace: from some of them he is not, at least ordinarily, but is inevitably bound over to the judgment of the great day. But the last degree is such as men ought to tremble at, who have the least care for or love unto their immortal souls. For whatever issue of things God may have provided in the purpose of his grace, the danger unto us is inexpressible. And there neither is nor can be unto any the least evidence, token, or hope, that God designs them any relief, whilst themselves are careless and negligent in the use of means for their own deliverance. It may, therefore, be inquired by what sort of sins this condition may be known in more strict professors than the common sort of Christians in the world, and how their barrenness under the gospel may be discovered thereby, as the cause by its effects and inseparable consequents. I shall, therefore, name some of those sins and ways with respect whereunto such persons ought to be exceeding jealous over themselves; as,—

(1.) An indulgence unto some secret, pleasant, or profitable lust or sin, with an allowance of themselves therein. That this may befall such persons, we have too open evidence in the frequent eruptions and discoveries of such evils in sundry of them. Some, through a long continuance in a course of the practice of private sins, are either surprised into such acts and works of it as are made public

whether they will or no; or, being hardened in them, do turn off to their avowed practice. Some, under terrors of mind from God, fierce reflections of conscience, especially in great afflictions and probabilities of death, do voluntarily acknowledge the secret evils of their hearts and lives. And some, by strange and unexpected providences, God brings to light, discovering the hidden works of darkness wherein men have taken delight. Such things, therefore, there may be amongst them who make a more than ordinary profession in the world. For there are or may be hypocrites among them,—vessels in the house of God of wood and stone. And some who are sincere and upright may yet be long captivated under the power of their corruptions and temptations. And for the sake of such it is principally that this warning is designed. Take heed lest there be in any of you a growing secret lust or sin, wherein you indulge yourselves, or which you approve. If there be so, it may be there is more in it than you are aware of; nor will your delivery from it be so easy as you may imagine. God seldom gives up men unto such a way, but it is an effect of his displeasure against their barrenness. He declares therein that he doth not approve of their profession. Take heed lest it prove an entrance into the dreadful judgment ensuing. Whatever, therefore, it be, let it not seem small in your eyes. There is more evil in the least allowed sin of a professor—I mean, that is willingly continued in—than in the loud and great provocations of open sinners. For besides other aggravations, it includes a mocking of God. And this very caution I now insist upon is frequently pressed on all professors by our apostle in this very epistle, chap. 3:12, 12:15, 16.

(2.) Constant neglect of private, secret duties. This also may be justly feared, lest it be an effect of the same cause. Now by this neglect I mean not that which is universal; for it is sure hard to meet with any one, who hath so much light and conviction as to make profession of religion in any way, but that he will and doth pray and perform other secret duties, at one time or another. Even the worst of men will do so in afflictions, fears, dangers, with surprisals, and the like. Nor do I intend interruptions of duties upon unjustifiable occasions; which though a sin which men ought greatly to be humbled for, and which discovers a "superfluity of naughtiness" yet remaining in them, yet is it not of so destructive a nature as that which we treat about. I intend, therefore, such an omission of duties as is general; where men do seldom or never perform them but when they are excited and pressed by outward accidents or occasions. That this may befall professors the prophet declares, Isa. 43:22, 23. And it argues much hypocrisy in them; the principal character of a hypocrite being that he will not pray always.

Nor can there be any greater evidence of a personal barrenness than this neglect. A man may have a ministerial fruitfulness and a personal barrenness; so he may have a family usefulness and a personal thriftlessness. And hereof negligence in private duties is the greatest evidence. Men also may know when those sins are consequences of their barrenness, and to be reckoned among the thorns and briers intended in the text. They may do it, I say, by the difficulty they will meet withal in their recovery, if it be so. Have their failings and negligence been occasional, merely from the impression of present temptations?—a thorough watering of their minds and consciences from the word will enable them to cast off their snares, and to recover themselves unto a due performance of their duties. But if these things proceed from God's dereliction of them because of their barrenness, whatever they may think and resolve, their recovery will not be so facile. God will make them sensible how foolish and evil a thing it is to forsake him under the means of fruitful obedience. They may think, like Samson, to go forth and do as at other times; but they will quickly find their locks cut, and their spiritual strength so decayed as that they have no power for what they thought would prove so easy unto them at any time. They will find their wills and affections so entangled and engaged, that without a fresh supply of grace, scarce less than that administered in their first conversion, they cannot be delivered. So is it with all lusts, sins, and negligences that are consequences of a provoking barrenness under the gospel.

(3.) A total want of some graces, both in their principle and exercise, is a great evidence of such a condition. Where there is any true saving grace, there is the root and principle of all. Some graces may be more tried and exercised than others, and so be made more evident and conspicuous; for the occasions of their exercise may much more frequently occur: but yet where there is any true grace, at least where it is kept unrusty, vigorous, and active, as it ought to be in all profiting hearers of the word, there every grace of the Spirit is so far kept alive as to be in some readiness for exercise when occasion and opportunity do occur. But if in any there are some graces that are totally wanting, that no occasion doth excite or draw forth to exercise, they have just reason to fear that either those graces which they seem to have are not genuine and saving, but mere common effects of illumination; or that, if they are true, they are under a dangerous declension, on the account of their unanswerableness unto the dispensation of the gospel. For instance, suppose a man to satisfy himself that he hath the graces of faith and prayer, and the like, but yet cannot find that he hath any grain of true zeal for the glory of God, nor any readiness for works of

charity with an eye to God's glory and love to his commands; he hath great reason to fear lest his other graces are false and perishing, or at least that he is signally fallen under the sin of barrenness. For in common grace, one single grace may appear very evident, and win great honour to the profession of them in whom it is, whilst there is a total want of all or many others: but in saving grace it is not so; for though different graces may exceedingly differ in their exercise, yet all of them are equal in their root and principle.

By these, and the like considerations, may professors try their own concernment in this commination.

Obs. III. Ordinarily God proceeds to the rejection and destruction of barren professors by degrees, although they are seldom sensible of it until they fall irrecoverably into ruin.

This ground here is first "disapproved" or "rejected;" then it is "nigh to cursing;"—the curse ensues; after which it is "burned." And God doth thus proceed with them, 1. In compliance with his own patience, goodness, and long-suffering, whereby they ought to be led unto repentance. This is the natural tendency of the goodness and patience of God towards sinners, though it be often abused, Rom. 2:4, 5. Let men and their sin be what they will, God will not deal otherwise with them than as becomes his own goodness and patience. And this is that property of God without a due conception whereof we can never understand aright his righteousness in the government of the world. Ignorance of the nature of it, and how essential it is unto the Divine Being, is the occasion of security in sinning and atheism unto ungodly men, Eccles. 8:11–13; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4. And a great temptation it is ofttimes unto them that are godly, Hab. 1:12, 13; Jer. 12:1, 2; Ps. 73:11–16, 21, 22. Wherefore, to direct our minds unto a due posture herein, we may consider,—(1.) That the patience of God never came to a general issue with mankind but once since the creation; and that was in the flood, 1 Pet. 3:20. And this one example God will have to be a sufficient warning unto all ungodly sinners of the certainty and severity of his future judgment; so that no men have just reason to be secure in their sin, 2 Pet. 3:5–7. And therefore he hath engaged himself by promise, that he will no more deal so with mankind, be their sins what they will, until the consummation of all things shall come, Gen. 8:21, 22. While the earth remaineth there shall be no more such a curse. But there is a limited time contained therein. The earth itself shall at length cease, and then he will execute his judgments fully on the world of ungodly sinners. Blessed be God for that public record of his purpose and patience, without which his continuance of mankind in the world would be

matter of astonishment. (2.) The patience of God shall not come to an issue with any apostate nation or church until he himself declares and determines that all due means have been used for their recovery, 2 Chron. 36:15–17. And the judgment hereof he will not leave unto the best of men;—he would not do so unto Elijah himself. (3.) It is a difficult, glorious, and great fruit or effect of faith, not to repine at, but to glorify God in his patience towards a wicked, provoking generation of sinners. Even the souls of the saints in heaven seem to express a little too much haste in this matter, Rev. 6:9–11. The thing which they desired was suited unto the holiness, righteousness, and faithfulness of God, and wherein he had designed to glorify himself in his appointed season, Rev. 19:1–3; but the time of it seemed long unto them: wherefore to glorify God herein is a fruit of faith, Rev. 13:10. The faith and patience of the saints are most eminent in waiting quietly until the time of the destruction of the enemies of the church be fully come. And it is so, [1.] Because it is accompanied with self-denial, as unto all our interest in this world, and all the desires of nature. [2.] Because the apprehension is most true and infallible, that the righteousness, holiness, and faithfulness of God, will be exceedingly glorified in the destruction of apostate, provoking, and ungodly sinners; and this will be in particular in the ruin of Babylon and its whole interest in the world. And this may make our desires inordinate, if not regulated by faith. It is therefore an eminent act of faith, to give glory unto God in the exercise of his patience towards apostate, barren professors; and that which alone can, in these latter days of the world, give rest and peace unto our own souls.

2. God will do so to evince the righteousness of his judgments, both in the hearts and consciences of them who shall be finally destroyed, "whose end is to be burned;" as also of all others who shall wisely consider of his ways. God endureth all things from the world, "that he may be justified in his sayings, and may overcome when he is judged," Rom. 3:4; that is, not only that all he doth shall be righteous and holy,—which is necessary from his own essential righteousness, whence he will not, whence he cannot do evil,—but his works shall be so wrought, so accomplished, as that the righteousness of them shall be evident, and pleadable by his people against all sayings and reflections of ungodly men. Especially, every thing shall be plain and visibly righteous that he doth in this way towards barren, unprofitable churches, which he had formerly owned and blessed. In his dealing with them, he will leave no colour of calling his goodness and faithfulness into question, but will, as it were, refer the righteousness of his proceedings unto all, even unto themselves. So he doth as to

his dealing with the church of the Jews when it was grown utterly barren, Isa. 5:1–7. So did our Lord Jesus Christ, in his parable, compel the wicked Jews to subscribe unto the righteousness of God in that miserable destruction which was coming on themselves, Matt. 21:33–46. And this God doth principally by his gradual procedure with them. His precedent warnings and first degrees of judgments, spiritual or temporal, shall bear witness unto the righteousness of their total ruin. Men at present, through their blindness, hardness of heart, love of sin, do not, it may be, take notice of God's dealing with them, and are therefore apt to complain when they are surprised with the fatal evil; but the day will come when their consciences shall be awakened unto a dreadful remembrance of all the warnings God gave them, and how slowly he proceeded in his judgments,—when their mouths shall be stopped, and their faces filled with confusion.

3. God's dealings with barren apostates being principally in spiritual judgments, the issue whereof is the total removal of the gospel from them, he will not do it at once, because others may be yet mixed among them unto whom he will have the means of grace continued. This Abraham laid down in temporal judgments, as an unquestionable maxim of divine right, that "God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked," Gen. 18:23, 25: which rule, yet, by the way, is confined unto that kind of destruction which was to be a standing token and pledge of the last final judgment, and the damnation of all ungodly men, for in other cases it will admit of some extraordinary exception; but this is the general way of God's procedure in all judgments, spiritual and temporal. Now, if when men openly manifest their barrenness, and daily bring forth thorns and briers, God should immediately remove the word, whilst there are amongst them a people also that are really fruitful unto his glory, it cannot be but that, in an ordinary course of his providence, they must suffer with the rest, and that before God hath fulfilled the whole work of his grace towards them. This was that wherewith he satisfied and quieted the mind of Elijah, when, in a transport of zeal, he complains of the horrible apostasy of the church of Israel, making, as the apostle speaks, "intercession against them;" and he applieth it unto all other seasons of the church, Rom. 11:2–5. And we are taught in that example, that when the patience of God towards a highly provoking people seems to interfere with his threatening and the ordinary course of his providence, we should believe that there are yet among them many whose hearts are sincere for God, though for many reasons they are unknown to us. And this should stir us up unto continual prayers for the whole world. When the

long-suffering of God is abused by the most, and turned into an increase of their security, yet he hath a blessed end in it towards his own among them, 2 Pet. 3:3, 4, 9. And this was the state of God's present dispensation towards these Hebrews. The most of them were obstinate unbelievers, and many of them barren apostates; but yet God continued for a while to exercise patience towards them, and to tender the gospel unto them. And this he did because there was a "remnant" amongst them "according to the election of grace," which were to "obtain," whilst "the rest were hardened," as our apostle declares, Rom. 11. And this patience of God the hardened wretches despised and scoffed at. But yet still God went on in his way and method, because of those amongst them whom, through that patience and long-suffering, he intended to bring to repentance and the acknowledgment of the truth.

Further to clear up this whole matter, it may be inquired what are those degrees in spiritual judgments whereby God doth ordinarily proceed against barren professors, which are here intimated in general. And, 1. In such cases God doth usually restrain the influence of men's light upon their own consciences and affections. Their light and knowledge which they have attained may in their notions remain with them, but they are not at all affected with what they know, or guided by it as unto their practice. There is a time when light and knowledge, not improved, do lose all their efficacy. God suffers such an interposition to be made between it and their consciences, by the acting and pride of their lusts, that it is of no use unto them. Whereas formerly, under their convictions, every thing they knew of the mind of God or the gospel pressed on them to endeavour after some conformity unto it; now it hath no power upon them, but only floats in their fancies and memories. And this we see accomplished every day. Men under a barren, apostatizing state, do yet retain some of their light and notions of truth; which they are sensible of no power from, nor have any use of, unless it be to enable them to be the greater scoffers and deriders of others. Now, although this comes to pass through their own sins and lusts as the immediate cause of it, yet it is a spiritual judgment of God also upon them for their sins. For he withholdeth all the working of his Spirit in and by that light, which alone renders it effectual. His Spirit shall not strive any more therein; and then it is easy for them to "rebel against the light" they have, as he speaks, Job 24:13. And let all men hence take heed, when they begin to find that their light and convictions from the word have not the same power with them and efficacy upon them as formerly they have had; for it is greatly to be feared lest it be a beginning of God's displeasure upon them. See Hos. 9:12.

2. God deprives them of all the gifts which formerly they received Gifts are an ability for the due exercise of gospel light and knowledge in the duties of a public concern. These they may be made partakers of who yet prove barren and apostates. But God will not suffer them to be long retained under a course of backsliding. As men neglect their exercise, so God deprives them of them, and makes that very neglect a means of executing this judgment on them. The talent that was but laid up in a napkin was taken away. And this we see exemplified both in whole churches and in particular persons. They lose, or are deprived of the gifts which they had, or which were among them; and are commonly filled with enmity unto and scorn of them by whom they are retained.

And in these two things consists the first act of God's judgment, in the rejection of the barren ground. Hereby he evidenceth that it is ἀδόκιμος, and such as he will regard no more.

The next is, that they make approaches towards the curse; and this is done two ways: 1. God having evidenced his rejection of them, he gives them up unto the temptation of the world, and the society of ungodly men, whereunto they are engaged by their pleasures or profit. "Men gather them," saith our Saviour, John 15:6. Their lusts being let loose from under the power of their light and convictions, especially their love unto the world, they cast themselves into the society of profane and wicked men. Among them they wax worse and worse every day, and learn, in an especial manner, to hate, despise, and blaspheme the good ways of God, which before they had known, owned, and professed. And God will so order things in his providence, as that temptations suited unto their most prevalent lusts shall, on all occasions, be presented unto them, whereby they shall be further ensnared. 2. God casts them out of the hearts and prayers of his people. This of all other things they least value, yea, they most despise; but it is one of the greatest effects of God's severity towards them. So he commanded his prophet not to pray for the people, when his heart would not be towards them, Jer. 7:16, 11:14, 14:11. And in like cases, though not by express command, yet by his secret providence, he takes off the hearts of his people from them whom he hath designed to ruin for their sins. And we may observe, that our apostle himself, who a long time laboured with unspeakable zeal and most fervent supplications to God for the incredulous Hebrews, as he expresseth himself, Rom. 9:2, 3, 10:1, at length speaks of them as those whom he no more regarded, but looked on as enemies of Christ only, 1 Thess. 2:14–16. And this sets them forward in their way towards the fatal curse.

Thirdly, the curse itself ensues, which consists in three things. For, 1. God takes off their natural restraints from sin. The rebukes of a natural conscience, fear, shame, and the like afflictive affections, shall have no more power on them. So he dealt with them that sinned against the light of nature, Rom. 1:26, 27; and they became like those described, Eph. 4:18, 19. No men are so visibly under God's curse as those who, having broken through the bonds of nature, modesty, fear, and shame, do give up themselves unto open sinning in the face of the sun. 2. God judicially hardens them; which contains the life and the power of the curse here intended, for hereby are men secured unto their final destruction and burning. 3. Ofttimes God signifies this curse in this world, by wholly casting out such persons from any interest in the dispensation of the word. He doth either utterly take away the preaching of the gospel from them, or give them up unto the conduct of those who, under a pretence thereof, shall cause them to err with lies and delusions; which further seals them up unto their future ruin, 2 Thess. 2:11, 12.

And these are some of the ways whereby God dealeth with barren ground, with fruitless and provoking professors, even whilst they are in this world. It is true, these judgments being spiritual, and they being now become wholly carnal, they are for the most part little sensible of them. God, indeed, doth sometimes cause the dread and terror of his wrath so to fall upon the consciences of some of them, as that in this world they are made a spectacle of divine vengeance; but for the most part, being filled with their lusts, and sins, and pleasures, they carry it out bravingly to the end. Howbeit few of them escape such reflections on themselves as makes them sometimes to shrink and groan. But suppose they should be able to carry it out stoutly in this world, so that themselves should neither much feel nor others much observe the curse of God upon them here, yet the day is hastening wherein actual burning, and that for ever, will be their portion.

Hebrews 6: 9–12

Expositors generally agree in giving these verses as an instance of the great wisdom and prudence used by the apostle in his dealing with these Hebrews. Chrysostom in especial insists upon it, making observations unto that purpose on all the considerable passages in the context. What is really of that nature will occur unto us, and shall be observed in our progress. His design in general is twofold:—First, To mollify the severity of the preceding commination, and prediction contained therein, that it might not have an effect on their minds

beyond his intention. He knew that, all circumstances considered, it was necessary for him to make use of it; but withal he was careful that none of them who were sincere should be terrified or discouraged. For if men are disanimated in the way wherein they are engaged, by those on whose guidance they depend, and unto whose judgment they are to submit, it makes them despond and give over thoughts of a cheerful progress. Wherefore in all cases our apostle was exceeding careful not in any thing to make heavy or sorrowful the hearts of his disciples, unless it were in case of extreme necessity. Hence is his apology or excuse, as it were, to the Corinthians for having put them to sorrow by some severe reproofs in his former letter to them, 2 Cor. 2:1, 2: "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again unto you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?" He lets them know, that whatever sorrow he had put them to, it was so unto himself no less than unto them, seeing they were the chiefest causes of his joy and gladness. And thus dealeth he in this place with the Hebrews. Lest they should be amazed with the terror of the preceding commination, and the prediction therein contained of the inevitable and dreadful ruin of slothful apostates and hypocrites, he lets them know that he did no way therein determine or pass a judgment on them, their state and condition. But having far other thoughts and hopes concerning them, and the end of their profession, he yet judged it necessary to excite them unto that diligence which some among them had neglected to use, by declaring the miserable end of those who always abide unfruitful under, or do apostatize from, the profession of the gospel. Herein doth he steer a direct and equal course between the extremes in admonition. For he neither useth so much lenity as to enervate his reproof and warning, nor so much severity as to discourage or provoke those who are warned by him. In a word, he layeth weight upon things, and spareth persons; the contrary whereunto is the bane of all spiritual admonition. Secondly, He maketh use of this discourse for a transition unto the second part of his design. And this was, to propose unto them who were true believers such encouragements and grounds of consolation as might confirm and establish them in their faith and obedience; which are the subjects of the remaining part of this chapter. Wherefore, as, to make way for the severe threatenings which he hath used, it was necessary for him to describe the persons unto whom they did in an especial manner belong, so it was no less requisite that he should describe those also unto whom the ensuing promises and consolations do pertain; which he doth in these verses.

Ver. 9.—Πεπείσμεθα δὲ περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀγαπητοί, τὰ κρείττονα καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας, εἰ καὶ οὕτω λαλοῦμεν.

Πεπείσμεθα, "persuasi sumus," "confidimus." Bez., "persuasimus nobis," "we are persuaded." Ἀγαπητοί. Syr., אַחַי, "my brethren." Vulg., "dilectissimi." Rhem., "we confidently trust of you, my best beloved." Τὰ κρείττονα, "meliora." Syr., אִילֵּין דִּשַׁפִּירִין, "ea quæ sunt bona, pulchra;" "the things that are good or comely." Καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας. Syr., וְקָרְיָבָן לְחַיֵּא, "and such as draw near to life;" that is, eternal. Vulg. Lat., "et vlciniora saluti." Rhem., "and nearer to salvation." Others generally, "et cum salute conjuncta." Ours, "and such as accompany salvation;" very properly.

Ver. 9.—But we are persuaded of you, beloved, better things, and such as accompany salvation, although we thus speak.

The especial design of the apostle, in this and the following verses, is to declare his good-will towards the Hebrews, his judgment of their state and condition, the reasons and grounds of that judgment, with the proper use and end of the commination before laid down, that neither that might be neglected nor themselves discouraged. This verse contains, 1. An expression of his love and good-will towards them; 2. His judgment of them; 3. The reason of his present declaration of both these, with respect unto what he had spoken before unto them, namely, that although he had spoken it unto them, he did not speak it of them.

Ἀγαπητοί. 1. His love and good-will he testifies in his compellation, ἀγαπητοί, "beloved." It is an expression of most entire affection, and is never used in the Gospels but to express the love of God the Father unto his Son Jesus Christ, Matt. 3:17, 12:18, 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7, 12:6; Luke 3:22, 9:35, 20:13. By the apostles in their epistles it is frequently applied unto believers, especially by Paul, in all those written by him: we might therefore pass it over, as that word which it was usual with him to express his sincere affection by towards all saints. But there seems to be a twofold reason of its especial introduction in this place, both of them respected in the wisdom of our apostle. (1.) Perhaps these Hebrews were ready enough to entertain jealousies concerning him, that he had not that affection for them which he had for others. For he had now spent a long time with and among the Gentiles, for their conversion and edification. Among them he had planted very many churches, and that on one point contrary to the judgment of most of these Hebrews, namely, in a liberty from the law and the ceremonies of Moses. In this long converse and work, they might suspect that

he had lost his natural love to his countrymen, as is usual in such cases, and as he was much accused to have done. To root this evil surmise out of their minds, as he useth frequently other affectionate compellations in this epistle, so he here calls them his "beloved;" than which he had used no expression of greater endearment towards any of his Gentile converts. And notwithstanding all the provocations and injuries he had received from them, he gave on all occasions the highest demonstration of the most intense affection towards them; never opposing them nor reflecting on them with any severity, but only then and wherein they opposed the gospel and the liberty thereof. This affection was such for them, as his countrymen and kinsmen in the flesh, as that he could willingly have died that they might be saved, Rom. 9:2, 3. And for this he prayed continually, chap. 10:1. And the addition of love that was made in him upon their conversion cannot be expressed. (2.) He hath respect unto his preceding severe expressions, as is plain from the close of this verse, "though we thus speak." As if he had said, 'Notwithstanding this severe admonition, which I have, upon the consideration of all circumstances, been forced to use, yet my heart stands no otherwise affected towards you but as towards my countrymen, brethren, and saints of God.' And thus,—

Obs. I. It is the duty of the dispensers of the gospel to satisfy their hearers in and of their love in Jesus Christ to their souls and persons.

Πεπείσμεθα. 2. The apostle expresseth his judgment concerning these Hebrews, "We are persuaded better things of you, and such as accompany salvation;" wherein we have, first, the act of his mind in this matter: Πεπείσμεθα, "We are persuaded." Chrysostom insists much on the force of this word. The apostle, as he observes, doth not say, 'We think,' or 'We hope;' but he was fully "persuaded." He lets them know that he was fully satisfied in this matter. And he useth not this word anywhere in his epistles (as he useth it often), but he intends a full and prevalent persuasion. Now this a man may have in spiritual things on three grounds: (1.) By especial revelation; so he was certain of the truth of the gospel that was revealed unto him, which he discourseth of, Gal. 1:7, 8. (2.) By the evidence of faith; when any thing is believed on grounds infallible, namely, the revelation of the mind of God in the Scripture, or the promises of the gospel. So he useth this word, Rom. 8:38, Πεπείσμεθα γάρ,—"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life," etc. This he believed, and had an infallible certainty thereof, because God had so promised. So also, 2 Tim. 1:12: Οἶδα γὰρ ᾧ πεπίστευκα, καὶ πέπεισμαι ὅτι δυνατός ἐστι τὴν παρακαταθήκην μου φυλάξαι,—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to

keep that which I have committed to him." He useth the same expression in matter of faith, Rom. 14:14. (3.) There is a certain persuasion of mind, that is founded on moral arguments, such as may bring a man to a full satisfaction in his mind, but yet so as it is possible he may be deceived. Of this nature is that persuasion, that trust or confidence, which we have of the good condition of other men. So our apostle speaks of Timothy and his faith, 2 Tim. 1:5: "The faith that dwelt in thy mother Eunice, πέπεισμαι δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐν σοί,"—"and I am persuaded in thee also." He was not persuaded of any sincere faith in Timothy by especial revelation, nor was it the object of his faith from any express word of Scripture, but he was satisfied of it upon such unquestionable grounds and motives as left no room for doubt about it. Some urge to the same purpose Phil. 1:6, Πέποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο,—"Being confident of this very thing," (persuaded of it), "that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ." But this persuasion, being built on a supposition that a good work was begun in them, was an act of faith infallible, built on the promises of God and the unchangeableness of his covenant. His persuasion here concerning the Hebrews was of this latter kind, even that which he had satisfactory reasons and grounds for, which prevailed against all contrary objections. In like manner he speaks of the Romans, chap. 15:14: Πέπεισμαι δὲ, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ μεστοί ἐστε ἀγαθωσύνης,—"And I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness." The grounds of this persuasion with respect unto the Hebrews, he expresseth in the next verse, where we shall consider them.

Obs. II. It is our duty to come unto the best satisfaction we may in the spiritual condition of them with whom we are to have spiritual communion.

There is not any thing of our mutual duties that the gospel more presseth, or more supposeth. And it is necessary both unto ministers and private Christians. For the former, they are concerned in the advice of the wise man, Prov. 27:23, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks." They are not only to provide good pasture and feeding for them, but they must know their state and condition, that what they provide for them may be suitable and seasonable. And unto this end there were at first some in the church who had the immediate inspection of the state and walking of the members of it, and were thereby enabled, as Moses said to his father-in-law, Num. 10:31, to be "instead of eyes" unto the teachers, to look into the condition of all sorts of persons. Nor can they without it discharge any one duty of their office in a due manner. For ministers to walk towards their people at "peradventure," and to "fight

uncertainly, as men beating the air," without an acquaintance with their state, and especial consideration of their condition, and what therein is suited unto their edification (as is the manner of many), will leave them at a great uncertainty how to give in their account. See Heb. 13:17. Unless a man have some good satisfaction concerning the spiritual condition of those that are committed unto his charge, he can never approve himself among them "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," to give unto all their proportion. And the work of the ministry is not by any means more evacuated and rendered ineffectual, than when men have not a certain design to deal with their hearers according unto what they are persuaded that their spiritual state doth require. How shall they instruct, how shall they warn, how shall they comfort any, but on a supposition of an acquaintance with the state and condition wherein they are? A general preaching at random, without a special scope, directed by the persuasion mentioned, turns the whole work for the most part, both in preachers and hearers, into a useless formality. In brief, this persuasion principally regulates the whole work of the ministry. He that is a physician unto the bodies of men, must acquaint himself with the especial state and condition of his patients, as also of their distempers, wherein his skill and judgment are especially to be exercised. Without that, let him be furnished with the greatest store of good medicines, if he give them out promiscuously unto all comers, all that he doth will be of little use. It may be, his medicines being safe, they will do no harm; and it is as probable they will do as little good. Nor will it be otherwise with the physicians of souls in the like case.

Four things are required to make the dispensation of the word proper and profitable; a good spring, a safe rule, a distinct design, and enlivening affections. (1.) The first is the dispenser's own light and experience. He is to see in his work with his own eyes, and not those of other men. And when he is by his own light as a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God, it is out of the good treasure of his own heart that he is to bring forth good things, new and old. (2.) His safe rule is the infallible word of truth. This must be the touchstone of his light and experience. And it is suited unto his whole work, unto all the duties of it, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. In nothing but what is regulated hereby are any to be attended unto, Isa. 8:20. (3.) His distinct design lies in the due consideration of the spiritual state and condition of them unto whom the word is to be dispensed. And herein consists the greatest part of the ministerial skill. This is that which secretly differenceth the constant ministerial dispensation of the word from the

occasional exercise of the gifts of any. And this doth God make use of to convey unexpected relief or repose unto the souls of men, wherewith they are surprised and affected. If we have not this scope continually before us, we may run apace, but never know whether we are in or out of the way. (4.) The enlivening affections that ought to accompany the dispensation of the word, are zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men. But these things must not here be insisted on. And for private Christians among themselves, their mutual duties are referred unto love and the fruits of it. That special love which ought to be among the disciples of Christ as such, takes up, in the description, injunctions, and directions of it, a great part of the writings of the New Testament. Nothing doth the Lord Christ himself and his apostles so urge upon them as this of mutual love. Upon the right discharge of this duty he frequently declares that his honour in them and by them in this world doth principally depend. And whatever we have besides this, our apostle declares that it is nothing, or of no use in the church of God, 1 Cor. 13. And the greatest evidence of the degeneracy of Christianity in the world, consists in the open loss of this love amongst those who make profession thereof.

[1.] Now this love is founded in our persuasion concerning the spiritual state and condition of each other. I mean, that especial mutual love is so which ought to be among the disciples of Christ as such. For although we are on other grounds obliged unto a love towards all mankind, whether friends or enemies, yet that peculiar love which the gospel so chargeth on the disciples of Christ is an effect of, and is built upon their common and mutual interest in Christ. They are to love one another as members of the same mystical body, and united unto the same spiritual Head. Whatever love there may be on other accounts among any of them, which doth not arise from this spring and fountain, it is not that gospel love which ought to be among believers. And how can this be in us, unless we have a good persuasion concerning our mutual interest and in-being in Christ? God forbid that any should press that peculiarly intense love that ought to be among the members of the body of Christ, to take off or derogate from that general love and usefulness which not only the law of our creation but the gospel also requireth of us in an especial manner towards all men; yea, he who professeth love unto the saints, that peculiar love which is required towards them, and doth not exercise love in general towards all men, —much more if he make the pretence of brotherly love the ground of alienating his affection from the residue of mankind,—can have no assurance that the love he so professeth is sincere, incorrupt, genuine, and without

dissimulation. But this special love is the special duty of us all, if we believe the gospel, and without which foundation well laid we can rightly discharge no other mutual duty whatever. Now this, as is evident, we cannot have unless we have a persuasion of the only ground of this love, which is our mutual relation unto Jesus Christ. And to act this love aright as to its object, as grounded on this persuasion, take heed of "evil surmises;"—these are the bane of evangelical love, though some seem to make them their duties. Those concerning whom we hear that they make profession of faith and obedience towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and know not that they any way contradict their profession by wicked works, we are obliged to bear the same love towards as if we knew them sincere. For "charity hopeth all things," namely, that are good, if we have no certain evidence to the contrary. And thus in general we may have this persuasion concerning "all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." We have no obligation, indeed, hereunto, towards such as visibly and evidently walk unworthy of that high calling whereby we are called. For concerning such our apostle assures us, that whatever they profess, they are "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things," Phil. 3:18, 19. It is a dishonour, a reproach to Christ and the gospel, that we should persuade ourselves that they are his disciples, and members of his mystical body, whom we see to walk after the manner of the world, and to have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh. These we are still to love, as those who once had, and are yet capable of the renovation of, the image of God upon them; but they proclaim themselves destitute of all those qualifications which are the formal object and reason of this peculiar love.

[2.] The Lord Christ hath, by his institution, secured us as to a certain rule of this persuasion and love, by the disposal of his disciples into church societies upon such grounds as are a sufficient warranty for it. Thus our apostle, in all his epistles unto the churches, salutes, esteems, judgeth them all to be "saints, and called in Christ Jesus." For although some of them might not be so really and in the sight of God, yet his persuasion and his love being directed according to the rule, were acceptable unto Christ. And whereas our Lord Jesus hath commanded that all his disciples should join themselves unto and walk in such societies, were there not great confusion brought into the world in and about gospel institutions, we should not be at a loss about this persuasion and love; for we should be obliged unto them towards all that are called Christians, until they

had openly declared themselves to be "enemies of the cross of Christ." But we are yet suffering under the confusion of a fatal apostasy, which God in his good time will deliver his churches from.

[3.] As we cannot direct our love aright without this persuasion, no more can we exercise any of the duties or fruits of it in a due manner. The fruits of mutual love among Christians are either in things spiritual, which concern edification; or in things temporal, which concern outward relief. Of the first sort, are admonition, exhortation, instructions, and consolations, mutually administered. Now, how can any man order or make use of these in a right manner, unless he have some directive persuasion of the spiritual condition of them unto whom he doth administer? It is true he may sometimes be therein mistaken; yet it is far better so to be than never to consider what is meet and requisite with respect thereunto. And as for the fruits of the same love in outward things, although they ought to be brought forth in the temporal supplies of all, according to our opportunities and abilities, yet without this persuasion they will want the quickening form and soul of them; which is a design to place our love in them ultimately on Jesus Christ.

Obs. III. We may, as occasions require, publicly testify that good persuasion which we have concerning the spiritual condition of others, and that unto themselves.

Our apostle here acquaints these Hebrews with his good persuasion concerning them; and likewise in all his epistles he still declares his hope and confidence of their blessed interest in Christ unto whom he wrote; and spares not to give them all the titles which really belong only to elect believers. Now, as this is not to be done lightly, not in a way of flattering compliance, not but upon just and firm grounds from Scripture, least of all to give countenance unto any to continue in an evil way or practice; yet in three cases it is warrantable and requisite:—(1.) When it is done for their due encouragement. Gracious persons, through their temptations, fears, and sense of sin; yea, whole churches, upon occasion of trials, distresses, and backslidings among them; may so be cast down and despond, as to be discouraged in their duties and progress. In this case it is not only lawful, but expedient, yea necessary, that we should testify unto them that good persuasion which we have concerning their state and condition, with the grounds thereof, as the apostle doth in this place. So in like case testified our Saviour himself concerning and unto the church of Smyrna: "I know thy poverty," what thou complainest of, and art ready to sink under; "but thou art rich," Rev. 2. (2.) It may and ought to be done for their just vindication. The

disciples and churches of Christ may be falsely accused and charged, and yet it may be with so much probability, or at least appearance of evil, as that they may greatly suffer in their just reputation, whereby the holy name of the Lord Christ is also dishonoured. He who falsely accuseth all the brethren before God continually, wants not instruments to fix calumnies upon them among men here below. In such a case it is our indispensable duty to testify our good persuasion concerning them, be they persons or churches, who are so traduced. And if we do it not, we have a copartnership in the guilt of their enemies' false accusations. (3.) When we have any necessary duty to discharge towards them, which this testification of our persuasion concerning them may render more effectual, or prevent it having another end than what we aim at, or remove any prejudice out of its way. This was the very case wherein the apostle testifieth his persuasion concerning them unto these Hebrews. His design was to admonish them of some faults, sins, and miscarriages, that had already been among them; and, moreover, to charge them with a care about apostasy from the gospel, which the way wherein some of them were seemed to have a tendency unto. But lest this his dealing with them, which had an appearance of much severity, should have begotten prejudices in their minds against his person and ministry on the one hand, or too much dejected and cast them down on the other, he secures his procedure on both sides with this testification of his confidence concerning their spiritual condition; thereby at once assuring them of his love, and evidencing the necessity of his admonition. And herein hath he, in the example of the wisdom bestowed on him for this end, given us an inviolable rule of our proceeding in like cases.

Obs. IV. The best persuasion we can arrive unto concerning the spiritual condition of any, leaves yet room, yea, makes way for, gospel threatenings, warnings, exhortations, and encouragements.

There is nothing more common than to charge the ways of some, that, by persuading men of their regeneration and saintship, they render them secure, and the threatenings of the gospel in an especial manner unuseful unto them. Neither is there any question but that this, as all other ways of God and his grace, may be abused. But those who manage the charge in general may do well to fix it in the first place on the apostles. For there are not any of them but testify the same persuasion concerning all them to whom they wrote; and there is no doubt but that their way of preaching and writing was the same. But yet this hindered them not from the use of all sorts of evangelical comminations, exhortations, and encouragements; from whence we are to take our example

and warranty for the same practice. This, therefore, lies evident in their procedure, which is our instruction and rule, namely, that looking on men as believers, or being persuaded of their good spiritual condition, we yet ought to apply unto them all the means appointed by Christ for the begetting, increase, and continuance of grace in them. And the reasons hereof are evident; for, (1.) Although that persuasion which men may have of their spiritual condition, or which others may have or declare concerning them, may strengthen their peace, yet it neither doth nor ought to incline them unto security. "Thou standest by faith," saith the apostle; "be not high-minded, but fear," Rom. 11:20; —'Take the peace and comfort of thy faith, but be neither proud nor secure.' Where there is any such effect hereof, towards a Laodicean security, there is a just ground to suspect that the persuasion itself is a pernicious mistake. And it is the duty of all professors to give heed diligently lest any such "root of bitterness" spring up amongst them and defile them. If once a persuasion of this good condition begins to influence towards security and a neglect of duty, then ought they to be in the highest jealousy concerning their condition itself. (2.) Whatever men's state and condition be under the gospel, they are still obliged unto the means appointed for their edification and preservation. Amongst all the vain imaginations about religious things vented in these latter days, there is none savours more rankly of satanical pride and human folly than that of such a state of perfection attainable in this life, wherein, as it is phrased, men should be "above ordinances;" that is, should be "vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds," above the authority, and wisdom, and truth of God. Whilst we are in the way, under the conduct of the gospel, we need all the advantages it affords in our progress. Of this sort are all the threatenings, promises, exhortations, encouragements, contained in it. And the proper use of gospel threatenings in particular, such as that here insisted on by our apostle, I have declared at large on the first and second verses of the fourth chapter, and shall not here again insist thereon.

It followeth hence, (1.) That whatever be the state and condition of them unto whom we dispense the word, or whatever we may conceive it to be, we are not, with respect thereunto, to baulk or waive the delivery and pressing of any evangelical warning, or the severest threatening contained in the gospel, much less encouragements and motives unto faith and obedience, though we are persuaded they both believe and obey. For as it is not impossible but that both they and we may be mistaken in their condition, and that the severest menaces may be their proper portion in the world; so, be their condition what it will, all

these things have not only their proper use towards them, but are necessary for them in their several kinds. For although they, every one of them as singly laid down, are of the same signification in themselves, yet in their application unto men they have a sense suited unto their condition. For instance:—the same threatening, as applied unto unbelievers, tends to beget dread, terror, and fear of wrath in them, to fill them with evidences of God's displeasure: as applied unto believers, it tends only to fill them with reverential fear of God, care to avoid the sin threatened, and to excite diligence in the use of means for its avoidance. All of them are good for all. As, therefore, if we should always, in the dispensation of the word, insist on the threatenings of the law and gospel,—whose denunciation multitudes do certainly stand in need of,—we might weaken and discourage those whom God would not have to be discouraged; so, on the other hand, if, out of an apprehension that our people or congregations are made up of believers, we should continually insist on the promises of the gospel, with the like springs of consolation, seldom or never pressing on them the threatenings and severe menaces thereof, we should certainly defraud them of a blessed means which God hath ordained for their edification and preservation in faith. The holy intermixture of all these things in the Scripture itself is to be our rule, and not any imagination of our own.

(2.) That others should not think themselves severely dealt with, when they are pressed on and urged with the severest threatenings of the gospel. Let them not say or think in their hearts, 'This preacher looks upon us as persons unregenerate, or hypocrites; perhaps out of ill-will unto us.' It is certain that on such occasions men are apt to give place to such surmises; for an apprehension thereof is the reason why the apostle maketh as it were this apology for the use of the foregoing severe commination. As if he had said, 'Do not you entertain any hard thoughts or evil surmises concerning me or my dealing with you in this matter. There are other reasons of my thus dealing with you; for as unto your personal interest in the grace of Christ, I have as yet a good persuasion, although I thus speak.' And let others take heed lest they fall into any such apprehension, which will certainly defeat them of the wholesome fruit of the word. Sharp frosts are needful to make the ground fruitful, as well as the clearest sunshine. And if a tree be not sometimes pressed on by the wind, it will never well firm its roots in the ground. Sharp reproofs, and earnestness in pressing gospel comminations, are sometimes as needful for the best of us as the administration of the richest and most precious promises, Hosea 10:11.

3. Having considered in general the good persuasion of the apostle concerning those Hebrews, we may consider in especial his expression of the things which he was so persuaded to be in them. And this is double: (1.) Τὰ κρείττονα,—"Better things;" (2.) Ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας,—"Such as accompany salvation."

Τὰ κρείττονα. (1.) He was persuaded concerning them τὰ κρείττονα,—"better things." There seems to be a comparison included in this expression, and not only an opposition unto what was [formerly] spoken. If so, then there is a supposition of some good things granted unto those [formerly] treated of. This therefore cannot refer unto the verses immediately before, which express only their barrenness and destruction, but it must relate unto verses 4–6, where the spiritual gifts collated on them are enumerated. They are "good things" in themselves, but yet such good things as may perish, and they also on whom they are bestowed. Those who enjoy them may yet be barren ground, and so cursed and burned. But the apostle is persuaded "better things" of those to whom he speaks, namely, "such things as accompany salvation;"—such as whosoever is made partaker of shall never perish eternally. Or τὰ κρείττονα may be put for τὰ χρηστά, "good things," as Chrysostom supposeth. But yet neither is there any need of supposing an impropriety in the expression; for it is usual to express excellent things in words of the comparative degree, although no comparison be included, especially when they are made mention of with respect unto others who have no interest in them.

However, here is certainly an opposition unto what was before affirmed concerning others. And that may be reduced unto two heads: [1.] That they were barren and destitute of all saving grace and fruits. [2.] That they should in the end be destroyed. These "better things" must be opposed to the one or other of these, or unto them both. If they are opposed unto the first, then especial saving grace and fruit-bearing, such as are peculiar unto God's elect, proceeding from the real sanctification of the Spirit, such as no perishing gifted hypocrites can be partakers of, are intended. If unto the latter, then those "better things" respect not their qualification, but their condition; that is, freedom from the curse and wrath of God, and from perishing under them: 'I am persuaded it will go better with you than with such apostates.' It may be both are included; but the first is certainly intended, namely, that these Hebrews were not barren, but such as brought forth the saving fruits of the Spirit of grace.

Καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας. (2.) For of these things it is added, Καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας,—"Such as accompany salvation:" literally, "such as have salvation;" that is, such as have saving grace in them, and eternal salvation infallibly annexed unto them,—things that are not bestowed on any, such as are not wrought in any, but those that shall be saved; that is, in brief, true faith and sincere obedience. For in whomsoever these are found, they shall be saved, by virtue of the faithfulness of God in the covenant of grace. And we may observe hence,—

Obs. V. That among professors of the gospel some are partakers of "better things" than others.

They were all professors concerning whom the apostle discourseth in this and the preceding verses; and yet, notwithstanding any good things that some might have had, or might be supposed to have had, others of them had better things than they. And this difference may be observed, first in the degrees, and secondly in the kinds of the things intended:—

(1.) Spiritual gifts are of one kind. For although there are several sorts of them, yet they have all the same general nature; they are all gifts, and no more. The difference, therefore, that is amongst them being not to be taken from their own especial nature, but their use and tendency unto the common end of them all, I take it only to be gradual. For instance, to speak with tongues and to prophesy, are two gifts of different sorts; but whereas they are both gifts of the Spirit, and are designed unto the furtherance of the gospel and edification of the church, the true difference between them is to be taken from their usefulness unto this end. Those, therefore, who have only gifts in the church, as they have different gifts, so they have some of them better gifts than others; some as to the especial kinds of gifts, but mostly as to the degrees of their usefulness unto their proper end. Hence our apostle, having reckoned up the various and manifold gifts of the Spirit, adds this advice unto the Corinthians, upon the consideration of them, Ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ κρείττονα, 1 Cor. 12:31; "Covet earnestly the best gifts,"—those that tend most to the edification of the church. Thus ever it was, and ever it will be, in the church of God; some have had, and some have better gifts than others. And as the whole church is hence to learn to acquiesce in, and submit to the sovereignty of the Spirit of God, "who divideth unto every man severally as he will;" so those who have

received these better and differing gifts, either in their especial nature or degrees of usefulness, have some duties singularly incumbent on them, and whose discharge will be required at their hands: as,—

[1.] To walk humbly, with a constant care that a sense of their gifts and abilities do not in their minds puff them up, fill them with conceits of themselves, as though they were somewhat, and so make them exalt themselves above their brethren. In the apostolical and primitive church, when there was nothing of that secular grandeur, promotion, preferments, dignities, amongst the ministers of the church, as now-a-days fill the world with pride and domination, all the danger of a hurtful elation of mind in one above another was from the eminency of gifts which some had received above others. And it cannot be denied but that the abuse hereof laid the foundation of all that swelling secular pride and cursed domination, or lordly rule, which afterwards pestered the church. The two things which the apostle Peter in one place cautions and chargeth the elders and guides of the church against, became their ruin, namely, filthy lucre, and love of domination over the Lord's heritage, 1 Pet. 5:2, 3. And, indeed, it is a very hard and difficult matter for men totally to suppress those insinuations of a good conceit of themselves, and preferring themselves before others, which gifts singular in their use and kind will suggest. Neither will it be effected without a constant exercise of grace. For this cause the apostle would not have a "novice" called to the ministry, or public exercise of spiritual gifts, namely, "lest he be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. 3:6. Afflictions and temptations for the most part, are a needful balance for eminent gifts. This, therefore, the Scripture hath provided against, both warning us that knowledge, which is the matter of all spiritual gifts, will puff up; and forbidding us to boast in them, because they are things which are freely bestowed on us, without respect unto any thing of good or worth in ourselves, 1 Cor. 4:7. And, if we reckon aright, those of us whose gifts are inferior unto those of other men,—provided we use and improve what we have received unto the best advantage we are able,—have no reason to envy them whose gifts outshine ours. For, if they are gracious, they have work enough cut out for them to keep them watchful over themselves unto humility; where yet it is to be feared that things do not always so well succeed, but that, by sinful surprisals of self-elating imaginations, there is work made for repentance and trouble. Yea, he who is eminently gifted, if he be not eminently humble, hath but an unquiet life within doors. And if such a person be not truly

gracious, he is in the ready way to "fall into the condemnation of the devil." Such a person is a prey to every temptation, and will also seduce himself into all evil.

[2.] It is required of such persons, as to be humble, so in an especial manner to be thankful. The things whereof they are partakers are gifts, and not to be thankful for gifts, is the most proper ingratitude.

[3.] A fruitfulness proportionable unto the excellency of their gifts. He who had received five talents was not only obliged to trade with them, but to get five talents more. The increase of one or two talents would not have served his turn. To whom much is given, of him not somewhat, but much is required. The hiding of many talents is a sin whereof there is no instance in the Scripture; it is a sin that hath a greatness in it not to be supposed; and those who may be concerned in it ought to tremble with the apprehensions of it. Our Lord is coming, and, alas! there is none of us who have traded with his talents as we ought to have done. We hope that, in his infinite mercy and compassion, he will spare and pardon, and accept of that little which we have endeavoured after in sincerity; but in the meantime we ought always to consider that labour and fruitfulness ought to be proportioned unto what we have received. But yet these are not the "better things" here directly intended. For from them, or any thing that is in the best of them, no such conclusion can be made as that here by our apostle, seeing he had showed before that they might all perish and be lost.

(2.) There are spiritual things which differ in their whole kind and nature from other things, and are better than they as to their essence and being. Such is all saving grace, with all the fruits of it. I shall not now stay to prove that true saving grace differs specifically from all common grace, however advanced in its exercise by the company and help of spiritual gifts, much less to wrangle about what doth formally constitute a specifical difference between things. But this I say plainly, which I can prove assuredly, that true gospel faith and sincere obedience are better things than the most glorious hypocrite or most reformed unregenerate person was ever made partaker of. In the visible professing church all things outwardly seem to be equal. There are the same ordinances administered unto all, the same profession of faith is made by all, the same outward duties are attended unto, and scandalous offences are by all avoided. But yet things are not internally equal. "Many are called, but few are chosen." "In a great house there are vessels of wood and stone," as well as of "gold and silver." All that eat outwardly in ordinances of the bread of life, do not feed on the hidden manna. All that have their names enrolled in the church's book may

not yet have them written in the Lamb's book. There are yet "better things" than gifts, profession, participation of ordinances, and whatever is of the like nature. And the use hereof, in one word, is to warn all sorts of persons that they rest not in, that they take not up with an interest in or participation of, the privileges of the church, with a common profession, which may give them a name to live; seeing they may be dead or in a perishing condition in the meantime.

Obs. VI. There are, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, such things bestowed on some persons as salvation doth infallibly accompany and ensue upon; better things, and such as have salvation accompanying of them.—This assertion is founded on the nature of the covenant of grace. In the first covenant it was not so. The best things bestowed by virtue of it might perish, and did so. Many excellent things were bestowed on us when we were created in the image of God: but they were all such things as we might lose, and did lose; and thereby came short of that glory of God which we were created for. But in the covenant of grace there is such a disposal and concatenation of spiritual things, that a real participation of some of them doth infallibly conclude unto an indefeasible interest in them all. This doth the apostle assure us in an express enumeration of them, Rom. 8:29, 30. For instance, there is a saving faith of this nature. For, (1.) It is an effect of God's immutable purpose of election. If that, therefore, cannot be changed, this cannot utterly fail and be lost. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also calleth;" that is, to saving faith by Jesus Christ. Faith is of God's elect; and they only believe truly who are "ordained to eternal life." (2.) The Lord Christ intercedeth that this faith may never fail, or be utterly lost, John 17:9, 11, 15, etc. (3.) The power of God is engaged in the preservation of it, 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:5; Eph. 1:19, 20. (4.) The promises of the covenant are expressly multiplied unto this purpose, Jer. 31:31–34, 32:38–40. And the like may be said of all other saving graces. And on this ground doth the apostle call those "better things" that these Hebrews were made partakers of, being "such as accompany salvation."

Obs. VII. It is the duty of all professors strictly to examine themselves concerning their participation of those "better things which accompany salvation."—Their condition is deplorable, who, under an outward profession, do satisfy themselves with those common gifts, graces, and duties, which are separable from salvation. Yet that it is so with many in the world, who thereon cry, "Peace, peace, whilst sudden destruction is coming upon them," is openly manifest. See the advice of the apostle express to this purpose, 2 Cor. 13:5.

We may yet further observe how variously the apostle treats these Hebrews. Sometimes he styles them "holy brethren," affirming them to be "partakers of the heavenly calling;" so also, that they had those "better things" in them "which accompany salvation." Sometimes he tells them that they were "dull" and "slothful," and "had need to be taught again what are the principles of the oracles of God;" and sets before them the final destruction of apostates, to ingenerate a fear and apprehension of the terror of the Lord in them. Now this variety in the apostle's treating of them proceeds not from present commotions, nor from any rhetorical artifice, but from a regular and steady judgment concerning the condition of the whole church. For, (1.) There were, indeed, several sorts of professors among them, answering the several descriptions he gives of them. He spake, therefore, to the whole community indefinitely, leaving the especial application of what he speaks unto themselves in particular, according as their different conditions did require. And this is the only safe and prudent way for ministers to deal with their flocks. For when any conceive themselves by other circumstances to be singled out for reproof and threatening, they commonly draw forth disadvantage to themselves thereby. (2.) The best of the hearers of the gospel may have much to be blamed in them, although their sincerity in general ought to be highly approved. (3.) Severe threatenings in the dispensation of the gospel are usually proposed unto them who yet are not absolutely liable to the penalty threatened. They do not predict what will come to pass, but warn what is to be avoided.

Hebrews 6: 10

Οὐ γὰρ ἄδικος ὁ Θεὸς, ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν, καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης, ἧς ἐνεδείξασθε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, διακονήσαντες τοῖς ἁγίοις και διακονοῦντες.

The Syriac renders ἄδικος by עַוָּל, "perversus," "iniquus." It omitteth κόπου also, as doth the Vulgar Latin; but expresseth τῆς ἀγάπης emphatically,—וְחוּבְכוֹן הָוֹו, and "that your love." Other material differences among translators there are not.

Ver. 10.—For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work, and the labour of that love which you have [evidently] shewed towards his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

The expositors of the Roman church do greatly perplex themselves and others in their comments on this text. They generally agree in an endeavour from hence to prove the merit of works against Protestants, because the council

of Trent applies this text to that purpose. And none are more confident herein than our Rhemists; who, after their usual reproaches of Protestants, affirm, 'That good works are meritorious, and the very cause of salvation; so that God should be unjust if he rendered not heaven for the same.' But they are greatly divided among themselves about the state of the persons and kind of the works here intended. Some contend that the apostle speaks to and of such as were fallen out of a state of justification into a state of deadly sin. And the works of which it is said that God will not forget them, are those which they wrought in that estate from whence they were now supposed to be fallen. For on the account of those former works God will spare them, and not destroy them. And although there be no present merit in these works, whilst those who wrought them are in a state of deadly sin, yet when they shall be recovered by penance, these works, which were before mortified by their falling from grace, and so became of no use as to present merit, shall recover their former meritorious virtue, as if they had never been forfeited by deadly sin. This, therefore, is the sense which these persons would affix unto these words: 'Where any have been in a state of justification, and have wrought good works therein, meritorious of eternal life, if they fall into deadly sin, they immediately lose all the merit and benefit of those works. But notwithstanding, God in his righteousness keeps the remembrance of these works, so that when such sinners return again by penance into their first estate, these works shall revive into a condition of merit.' This sense is opposed by others. For they think those mentioned are justified persons, and the apostle expresseth the merit of their present works, with respect unto the righteousness of God. The reader who desires to see such chaff tossed up and down, may find these things debated in Aquinas, Adamus, Estius, à Lapide, Ribera, Maldonatus, de Tena, and others of them on the place.

1. How foreign these discourses are to the text and context is evident to every impartial considerer of it. They are only chimeras hatched out of the proud imaginations of the merit of their works, that these men's minds are prepossessed withal. For, (1.) Our apostle treats of those whom he supposeth and judgeth to be in a present good spiritual condition. For with respect thereunto he ascribeth unto them "things that accompany salvation," and prescribeth no other duty unto them, for the actual enjoyment of it, but only those of faith and love, and ministration unto the saints; which at present he commendeth in them. What they did formerly, that he affirms them to continue in the performance of: "You have ministered, and you do minister." (2.) The apostle expressly distinguisheth them concerning whom he now speaks from those who

were now fallen off from the profession of the gospel, or that state of justification which the Romanists suppose. (3.) He doth not direct these persons to seek after a recovery out of the condition wherein they were, but encourageth them unto a continuance therein, and to "show the same diligence" unto that purpose as formerly, "to the end," verse 11. Nothing, therefore, is more fond than to suppose that any thing is here taught concerning the mortification of good works as to their merit by deadly sin, and the recovery thereof by penance,—a fiction which these men dream of to no purpose.

2. Neither is countenance given unto the other imagination in general, concerning the merit of works, in these words. For, first, the design of the apostle is only to let them know that their labour in the work of the Lord, that their obedience unto the gospel, should not be lost, or be in vain. And hereof he gives them assurance from the nature of God, with whom they had to do, with respect unto that covenant whereinto he takes them that do believe. They had been sedulous in the discharge of the great duty of "ministering unto the saints," in particular upon the account of the name of Jesus Christ that was upon them. These duties had been attended with trouble, danger, and charge. And it was needful to confirm them in a persuasion that they should not be lost. This they might be two ways: (1.) If themselves should fall away, and not persist in their course unto the end. (2.) If God should overlook, or forget, as it were, all that they had done. Against both these apprehensions the apostle secures them. From the first, in that the works mentioned having been truly gracious works, proceeding from faith and love, they evidence their persons to be in that state of grace wherein they should be effectually preserved unto the end, by virtue of God's faithfulness in covenant; which he further pursues towards the end of the chapter. Nor, secondly, had they the least reason to doubt of their future reward. For who was it that called them to these duties, and on what account? Is it not God, and that according unto the tenor of the covenant of grace? and hath he not therein promised to accept their persons and their duties by Jesus Christ? If now he should not do so, would he not be unrighteous, must he not deny himself, and not remember his promise? Wherefore the righteousness of God here intended, is his faithfulness in the promises of the covenant. And he is not said to be righteous in rewarding or not rewarding, but in not forgetting: "He is not unrighteous to forget." Now, to forget any thing doth not reflect immediately on distributive justice, but upon fidelity in making good of some engagement. But, not to engage into disputations in this place, let men acknowledge that the new covenant is a covenant of grace; that the constitution

of a reward unto the obedience required therein is of grace; that this obedience is not accepted on its own account, but on account of the mediation of Christ; that all men's good works will not make a compensation for one sin; that we are to place our trust and confidence in Christ alone for life and salvation, because he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and let them please themselves for a while in the fancy of the merit of their works, at least of the high and necessary place which they hold in their justification before God;—after all their wrangling disputes it will be Christ and his grace alone that they will betake themselves unto, or their case will be deplorable. These things I have premised, that we may have no cause to divert unto them in the ensuing exposition of the words.

The apostle in this verse gives an account of the grounds of his persuasion concerning these Hebrews, expressed in the verse foregoing. And these he declares unto them partly for encouragement, and partly that they might be satisfied of his sincerity, and that he did not give them fair words to entice or allure them by. And the reasons he gives to this purpose may be reduced unto two heads:—1. The observation which he had made concerning their faith and love, with the fruits of them. 2. The faithfulness of God in covenant, whereon the final preservation of all true believers doth depend.

These are the grounds of that persuasion concerning their state and condition which he expressed in the foregoing words. Hence that persuasion of his was of a mixed nature, and had something in it of a divine faith, and somewhat only of a moral certainty. As he drew his conclusion from, or built his persuasion on, God's faithfulness or righteousness, so there was in it an infallible assurance of faith, that could not deceive him; for what we believe concerning God, as he hath revealed himself, is infallible. But as his persuasion had respect unto the faith, love, and obedience, which he had observed in them, so it was only a moral assurance, and such as in its own nature might fail; for God only is καρδιογνώστης, and we who judge by the outward evidences of invisible things may be deceived. The proposition from God's faithfulness is of infallible truth; the application of it unto these Hebrews of moral evidence only. Such a persuasion we may have in this case, which is prevalent against all objections, a certain rule for the performance of all duties on our part towards others; and such had the apostle concerning these Hebrews.

Ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν. FIRST, That which in the first place he confirms his persuasion with, is τὸ ἔργον, "their work:" "God is not unrighteous, to forget your work." It is not any singular work, but a course in working which he

intends. And what that work is, is declared in that parallel place of the same apostle, 1 Thess. 1:3, Μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως, καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης,—(the same expressions with those in this place, which may be reckoned unto the multitude of other instances of coincidences of expressions in this and the other epistles of the same writer, all peculiar unto himself, arguing him to be the author of this also,)—"Remembering your work of faith, and labour of love." The work here intended is the "work of faith," the whole work of obedience to God, whereof faith is the principle and that which moves us thereunto. Hence it is called "the obedience of faith," Rom. 16:26.

And this obedience of faith according to the gospel is called there, τὸ ἔργον, "their work." 1. Because it was their chief employment, their calling lay in it. They did not attend unto it occasionally, or when they had nothing else to do, as is the manner of some. Religion was their business, and gospel obedience their daily work. This was their "whole," even to "fear God, and keep his commandments," as it is expressed in the Old Testament. 2. Because there is work and labour in it, or great pains to be taken about it. For hereunto our apostle in the next verse requires their "diligence," verse 11; as Peter doth "all diligence," 2 Epist. 1:10. And we may observe in our way,—

Obs. I. That faith, if it be a living faith, will be a working faith.

It is the "work of faith" which the apostle here commends. This case is so stated by James that it needs no further confirmation: chap. 2:20, "Wilt thou know," (or "knowest thou not,") "O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" He is a most vain man who thinks otherwise, who hopes for any benefit by that faith which doth not work by love. Satan hath no greater design in the world than to abuse gospel truths. When the doctrine of free justification by faith, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, was first fully revealed and declared, his great design then was to persuade men that there was no need of obedience; and so they could attain any manner of persuasion of the truth of the gospel, or make profession thereof, they might live in sin as they pleased, and neglect all good works and duties of obedience. And although this be now condemned by all, yet indeed is it no more but what upon the matter most do practise according unto. For they suppose, that by being of this or that religion, Papists, or Protestants, or the like, they shall be saved, whatever their ways and works are. So Papists, for instance, are indeed the greatest Solifidians in the world. For to own the faith of the church is enough with them to secure the salvation of any. This abomination having been early started, was seasonably suppressed by the writings of James and John. For the former directly and

plainly lays open the vanity of this pretence, declaring that that faith which they professed and boasted of was not the faith whereby any should be justified before God, nor of the same kind with it. For this faith is living, operative, and fruitful, and evidenceth itself unto all by its works and fruits; whereas that faith, whereof vain men living in their sins did boast, was so far from being a grace of the Spirit of God, that it was no other but what was in the devils themselves, and which they could not rid themselves of if they would. The latter, without expressing the occasion of it, spends his first epistle in declaring the necessity of love and obedience, or keeping the commandments of Christ. Wherefore the enemy of our salvation being defeated in this attempt, he betook himself unto the other extreme; contending that the works of faith had the same place in our justification with faith itself. 'And why should they not? Are not faith and they equally acts of obedience in us? are not faith and they equally required by the gospel? why may they not be supposed to have an equal influence into our justification,—at least in the same kind, though faith on some considerations may have the pre-eminence?' I say these things are speciously pleaded; but in short, the design is not to advance works into an equality with faith, but to advance them into the room of Christ and his righteousness. For when we say we are justified by faith only, we do not say that faith is our righteousness, but as it apprehends the righteousness of Christ, as he is the end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe. And this is the use that God hath designed faith unto, and which in its own nature it is suited for. But bring in the works of obedience into the same place, and they are of no use but to be imputed unto us for righteousness and so to possess the place of Christ and his righteousness in our justification, unto their exclusion. But all this trouble might have been spared, if men had not been too ready and prone to receive impressions from the crafty actings of Satan against the purity and simplicity of the gospel. For nothing is more evidently expressed and taught therein than are these two things:—1. That we are justified freely by faith, through the redemption that is in the blood of Christ, and so by the imputation of his righteousness unto us. 2. That the faith which hath this effect, which is of this use, is living, operative, fruitful, and will evidence itself by works, in obedience unto the commands of God. And this is that which here we contend for, namely, that a living faith will be a working faith. And he is a vain man that deceives himself with any thing else in the room thereof. And yet this is the course of multitudes. But yet men do not deceive themselves herein notionally, but practically. I never yet met with any man in my life who professed it as his

judgment, that so he believed aright, he might live as he pleased, follow his lusts, and neglect all good works or holy duties of obedience; for this implies a contradiction. So to believe, is so far from believing aright, as that it contains in it a total rejection of the gospel. But practically we see that the generality of men content themselves with that knowledge they have of religion, and that faith which they suppose they have in Christ, without once endeavouring after amendment of life or fruitfulness in good works. Now this is not from any conclusions they draw from any doctrines which they profess to believe, but from the power of darkness and the deceitfulness of sin that ruleth in them. And it is no otherwise among them who are taught to believe that they are justified by their works. For there is not a race of greater and more flagitious sinners than, for the most part, are the men of that persuasion. Only, for their relief, their leaders have provided them with a commutation of some other things instead of their good works, which shall do the deed for them, as penances, pardons, purgatory, confessions, pilgrimages, and the like. But be men's persuasion what it will, right or wrong, where sin is predominant they will be wicked; and whatever be the object of their faith, if it be not living in the subject, it cannot work nor be fruitful.

Obs. II. We ought to look on obedience as our work, which will admit neither of sloth nor negligence.

Here lies the occasion of the ruin of the souls of many who profess the gospel. The duties of profession are a thing out of course unto them, and that which lies without the compass of their principal work and business in the world. This makes their profession serve to no other end but to make them secure in a perishing condition. Now, that our obedience may indeed be our work, it is required, 1. That the carrying of it on, the attendance unto it, and furtherance of it in order unto the glory of God, be our principal design in the world. That is a man's ἴδιον ἔργον, his "proper work," which is so. God severely threateneth those which walk with him at peradventures: Lev. 26:21, וְאִם־תֵּלְכוּ עִמִּי קֶרִי,—"If you shall walk with me fortuito, at hap-hazard;" that is, 'without making it your principal design, and using your utmost diligence and care to proceed in it in a right manner:' וְהָלַכְתִּי אַף־אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקֶרִי, verse 24, "then will even I myself walk with you at all adventures;" 'though I continue with you, as one walking with you, in my outward ordinances and institutions, yet will I have no regard unto you, as to do you any good, yea, I will sorely punish you notwithstanding the appearance of our walking together,' as it follows in the place. Yet is this the course of many, who please themselves in their condition. They walk with God

in outward appearance, by the performance of duties in their times, course, and order; but they walk "at all adventures," as unto any especial design of their minds about it. Barnabas exhorted the disciples at Antioch, that "with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord," Acts 11:23; τῇ προθέσει τῆς καρδίας,—that is, with a firm resolution to abide in and pursue the obedience they were called unto. So Paul tells Timothy, that he "knew his doctrine, manner of life, and purpose," 2 Tim. 3:10; namely, how his principal aim, design, and resolution, were to abide in and carry on his course of faith and obedience. And then is any thing the object of our purpose and principal design, (1.) When we subordinate all other things and occasions unto it, that they may not jostle, nor interfere, nor stand in competition with it; when to us to live is Christ, or he is the chief end of our life. When men do usually and ordinarily suffer other things to divert them from duties of obedience in their season, obedience is not their principal design. (2.) When it possesseth the chiefest place in our valuation and esteem. And this it doth absolutely where we attain that frame, that whilst the work of faith and obedience thrives in our hearts and lives, we are not much moved with whatever else befalls us in this world. This was the frame of our apostle, Acts 21:13; Phil. 3:7, 8. But because of the weakness and engagement of our natural affections unto the lawful comforts of this life, some are not able to rise unto that height of the undervaluation and contempt of these things, whilst the work of our obedience goes on, which we ought all to aim at. Yet we must say, that if there be any sincerity in making our obedience the principal design of our lives, there will be a constant preference of it unto all other things. As when a man hath many particular losses, he may be allowed to be sensible of them; yet if he have that still remaining wherein his main stock and wealth doth consist, he will not only be relieved or refreshed, but satisfied therewith. But if a man who pretends much unto a great stock and trade in another country, gives up all for lost upon some damages he receiveth at home in his house or shop, it is plain he hath no great confidence in the other treasure that he pretended unto. No more have men any especial interest in the work of obedience, which, whilst they suppose it to be safe, do yet lose all their comforts in the loss of other things. (3.) When any thing is the object of our chief design, the principal contrivances of our minds will be concerning it. And this makes the great difference in profession and duties. Men may multiply duties in a course of them, and yet their spirits not be engaged in and about them as their business. Consider how most men are conversant about their secular affairs. They do not only do the things that are to be done, but they beat, as we say,

their heads and minds about them. And it is observed, that however industrious in their way many men may be, yet if they have not a good contrivance and projection about their affairs, they seldom prosper in them. It is so also in things spiritual. The fear of the Lord is our wisdom; it is our wisdom to keep his commandments and walk in his ways. Now the principal work of wisdom is in contriving and disposing the ways and methods whereby any end we aim at may be obtained. And where this is not exercised, there obedience is not our work. How temptations may be avoided, how corruptions may be subdued, how graces may be increased and strengthened, how opportunities may be improved, how duties may be performed to the glory of God, how spiritual life may be strengthened, peace with God maintained, and acquaintance with Jesus Christ increased, are the daily thoughts and contrivances of him who makes obedience his work. 2. Actual diligence and watchfulness is required in our obedience, if we do make it our work. And, 3. A due consideration of what doth and will rise up in opposition unto it, or unto us in it: which things being commonly spoken unto, I shall not here enlarge upon them.

Καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης. The second thing whereon the apostle grounds his confidence concerning these Hebrews, is their "labour of love,"—καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης: for the words express a distinct grace and its exercise, and are not exegetical of the preceding expression. It is not, "Your work, that is, your labour of love;" but this "labour of love" is distinguished from their "work" in general, as an eminent part or instance of it. This the copulative conjunction after ὑμῶν evinceth: Τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν, καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης·—of "your work," that is, of obedience in general, the work of faith; "and of your labour of love," namely, in particular and eminently. Κόπου, as we observed, is passed by in some translations, but without cause; the original copies are uniform in it, and the parallel place doth expressly require it, 1 Thess. 1:3.

There is in the remaining part of this verse, which depends on these words:—1. What the apostle ascribes unto these Hebrews; which is the "labour of love." 2. The way whereby they evidenced this labour of love; they "showed" it. 3. The object of it; and that is the "saints." 4. The formal reason and principal motive unto it; which is the "name of God," for his name's sake. 5. The way of its exercise; it was by ministration, both past and present; "in that you have ministered, and do minister."

In the first of these the apostle observes the grace itself, and its exercise,—their "love," and its "labour." This grace or duty being excellent and rare, and its exercise in labour being highly necessary and greatly neglected, and both in

conjunction being a principal evidence of a good spiritual condition, of an interest in those "better things which accompany salvation," I shall a little divert unto the especial consideration of them:—

Τῆς ἀγάπης. First, Ἀγάπη, "love," is the second great duty of the life of God which is brought to light by the gospel. It is faith that gives glory to God on high, and love that brings peace on the earth; wherein the angels comprised the substance of our deliverance by Jesus Christ, Luke 2:14. Neither is there any thing of it in the whole world but what is derived from the gospel.

All things were at first made in a state of love. That rectitude, order, peace, and harmony, which were in the whole creation, was an impression from and an expression of the love of God. And our love towards him was the bond of that perfection, and the stability of that state and condition. The whole beauty of the creation below consisted in this, namely, in man's loving God above all, and all other things in him and for him, according as they did participate of and express his glory and properties. This represented that love which was in God towards all his creatures, which he testified by declaring them to be all "very good."

When man by sin had broken the first link of this chain of love, when thereby we lost the love of God to us, and renounced our own love unto him, all things fell into disorder and confusion in the whole creation,—all things were filled with mutual enmity and hatred. The first instance of mutual love among the creatures was that between angels and men, as those which were in the nearest alliance, and made for the same end, of the glory of God. For as the angels rejoiced in the whole creation of God, when those "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job 38:7; so man, being the most capable object of their love, was their especial delight: and man being made to love God above all, and all other things in him and for him, his principal love must be fixed on those who had the most of the image, and made the most glorious representation of God. But the bond of love being dissolved, mutual enmity succeeded in the room thereof. And the first act of angelical obedience we read of, was their keeping man from a return into Eden, and eating of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24; and man could look on them only as flaming swords, ready to execute the wrath of God and the curse upon him. And this state would have continued unto eternity, had not God gathered all things again into one, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in Christ Jesus, Eph. 1:10. There could never more have been any love, nor any duties of love, between angels and men, had not God restored all things by Jesus Christ.

This is the only foundation of the whole ministry of angels in love, Heb. 1:14. For men themselves, mutual enmity and hatred possessed them; and he who first acted in that frame and spirit which came upon them was a murderer, and slew his brother. And this the apostle proposeth as the instance and example of that hatred and enmity which is among men under the curse, 1 John 3:11, 12. And there is no greater evidence of any person's being uninterested in the restoration of all things by Christ, than the want of that love which was again introduced thereby. So the apostle, describing the condition of men in their unregenerate condition, affirms that they "live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Tit. 3:3. There ensued also an enmity between man and all the creation here below. The sin of man had brought all things into a condition of vanity and bondage; which they groan to be delivered from, Rom. 8:20–22. And the earth, the common mother of them all, as it were to revenge itself on man, brings forth nothing but thorns and thistles, Gen. 3:18; and yields not her strength to his labour, Gen. 4:12. Hence is all that vanity, vexation, and sore travail, which the life of man is filled withal. After the entrance of this disorder and confusion there was nothing of true original love in the world, nor was it by any means attainable; for it all arose from the love of God, and was animated by our love unto him. But now all things were filled with tokens and evidences of the anger, displeasure, and curse of God for sin; and men were wholly alienated from the life of God. No new spring or life could be given unto love, but by a new discovery that God was love, and had a love for us. For so the apostle tells us, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 4:10. But "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," verse 11. No love could there be, until a fresh revelation was made that "God is love;" for the first which he had made, in the creation, was utterly lost. And this was done by Jesus Christ.

There was some stop made unto that confusion which ensued on the loss of this universal love, by the first promise; without which the whole lower creation would have been a hell, and nothing else. This was the spring of all that love which was in the old testament, because it was a new discovery that there was yet love in God towards fallen mankind. And whatever in the world may pretend thereunto, yet if it proceed not from the new revelation and discovery that "God is love," it is nothing of that divine love which is required of us. And this is only in Christ; in him alone the χρηστότης and φιλανθρωπία, the "benignity and love of God unto mankind," appeared, Tit. 3:4. And here is a foundation laid and a spring opened of a love far more excellent than that which our nature

was furnished and adorned withal in the first creation. For the love of God being the cause and fountain of ours, which is a compliance with the manifestation of it, the more eminently the love of God is manifested the more eminent is that love which is the fruit thereof. And God's love is far more gloriously displayed in Christ than it was in all the works of his hands. In him alone we know not only that God hath love, but that he is love; that he hath love for sinners, and that such a love as, in the spring, means, and effects of it, is every way ineffable and incomprehensible.

The whole of what I intend is expressed by the apostle John, 1 Epist. 4:7–12: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." All that we have before affirmed, and much more, is here declared by the apostle. It is God's being love himself which is the eternal spring of all love in us. Neither could we have any thing of it, or interest in it, without some glorious effect and manifestation of the love of God; which he also gave in "sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And the love which proceeds from hence hath all the glorious properties here ascribed unto it. Wherefore there is no such way and means whereby we may express the distinguishing light, grace, and power of the gospel, no such evidence of the reality of our interest in God, as love; or in the love of God by Christ, as by and in our own love to him and his.

The mystical body of Christ is the second great mystery of the gospel. The first is his person, that "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." In this mystical body we have communion with the Head, and with all the members; with the Head by faith, and with the members by love. Neither will the first complete our interest in that body without the latter. Hence are they frequently conjoined by our apostle, not only as those which are necessary unto, but as those which essentially constitute, the union of the whole mystical body, and communion therein, Gal. 5:6; Eph. 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:14, 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13, 2:22: wherefore without love we do no more belong to the body of Christ than without faith itself. And in one place he so transposeth them in his expression, to manifest their inseparable connection and use unto the union

and communion of the whole body, as that it requires some care in their distribution unto their peculiar objects: Philem. 5, "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." Both these graces are spoken of as if they were exercised in the same manner towards both their objects, Christ and the saints. But although Christ be the object of our love also, and not of our faith only, yet are not the saints so the object of our love as to be the object of our faith also. We believe a communion with them, but place not our trust in them. There is therefore a variation in the prepositions prefixed unto the respective objects of these graces,—πρὸς τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, and εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους. And this directs us unto a distribution of these graces in their operations unto their distinct objects;—faith towards the Lord Jesus, and love to the saints. But they are so mixed here, to declare the infallible connection that is between them in the constitution of the mystical body of Christ. This, therefore, is the form, life, and soul, of all mutual duties between the members of Christ's mystical body. Whatever passeth between them in outward works, wherein they may be useful and beneficial unto one another, if it spring not from this principle of love, if it be not quickened and animated thereby, there is nothing of evangelical communion in it.

Whereas, therefore, this grace and duty is the peculiar effect and glory of the gospel, the form and life of the mystical body of Christ, the pledge and evidence of our interest in those "better things which accompany salvation," I shall briefly declare the nature of it, and show the reason of the necessity of its diligent exercise.

Mutual love among believers is a fruit of the Spirit of holiness, and effect of faith, whereby, being knit together in the bond of entire spiritual affection, on the account of their joint interest in Christ, and participation of the same new, divine, spiritual nature from God, they do value, delight, and rejoice in one another, and are mutually helpful in a constant discharge of all those duties whereby their eternal, spiritual, and temporal good may be promoted.

1. It is a fruit of the Spirit of holiness, of the Spirit of Christ, Gal. 5:22. It is no more of ourselves than faith is; it is the gift of God. Natural affections are inlaid in the constitution of our beings. Carnal affections are grown inseparable from our nature as corrupted. Both, excited by various objects, relations, occasions, and interests, do exert themselves in many outward effects of love. But this love hath no root in ourselves, until it be planted in us by the Holy Ghost. And as it

is so, it is the principal part of the renovation of our natures into the image of God, who is love. This "love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God," 1 John 4:7. You are taught of God to love one another.

2. It is an effect of faith. "Faith worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. Hence, as we observed before, "love to the saints" is so frequently added unto "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," as the effect and pledge of it. And although it proceeds in general from faith as it respects the commands and promises of God, yet it derives immediately from faith as acted on the Lord Jesus Christ. For he being the head of the whole mystical body, it is faith in him that acts itself by love towards all the members. Holding him, the head, by faith, the whole body edifies itself in love, Eph. 4:15, 16. And the more sincere, active, and firm our faith in Christ is, the more abundant will our love be towards all his saints. For faith in Christ doth first excite love unto him; from whom, as it were, it descends unto all that it finds of him in any others. And our love of the saints is but the love of Christ represented and exhibited unto them in us. The Papists tell us that love, or charity, is the form or life of faith, without which it is dead. It is so far true, that, according to the apostle James, where it is not, there faith is dead. Not that it is the life of faith, but that faith, wherever it is living, will work by love. Faith, therefore, is the life, the quickening, animating principle of love, and not on the contrary. And that love which proceedeth not from, which is not the effect of, which is not enlivened by faith, is not that which the gospel requireth.

3. Believers are knit together in an entire affection. This is that cement whereby the whole mystical body of Christ is "fitly joined together and compacted," Eph. 4:16. This mutual adherence is by the uniting, cementing efflux of love. It is but an image of the body, or a dead carcass that men set up, where they would make a bond for professors of Christianity, consisting of outward order, rules, and methods of duties. A church without it is a heap of dead stones, and not living stones, fitly compacted and built up a temple unto God. Break this bond of perfection, and all spiritual church-order ceaseth; for what remains is carnal and worldly. There may be churches constituted in an outward, human order, on supposed prudential principles of union, and external duties of communion, which may continue in their order, such as it is, where there is no spiritual, evangelical love in exercise among the members of them; but where churches have no other order nor bond of communion but what is appointed by Christ, wherever this love faileth, their whole order will dissolve.

4. This mutual love among believers springs from and is animated by their mutual interest in Christ, with their participation of the same divine nature thereby. It is from their union in Christ, the head, that all the members of the body do mutually contribute what they derive from him unto the edification of the whole in the exercise of love. Hereby are they all brought into the nearest relation to one another; which is the most effectual motive and powerful attractive unto love. For as the Lord Christ saith of every one that doth the will of God, "The same is my brother, and sister, and mother," Matt. 12:50,—he is dearly beloved by him, as standing in the nearest relation unto him: so are all believers, by virtue of their common interest in Christ their head, as brothers, sisters, and mothers to each other; as members of the same body, which is yet nearer; whence the most intense affection must arise. And they have thereby the same new spiritual nature in them all. In love natural, he that doth most love and prize himself commonly doth least love and prize others. And the reason is, because he loves not himself for any thing which is common unto him with others, but his self-love is the ordering and centring of all things unto his own satisfaction. But with this spiritual love, he that loves himself most,—that is, doth most prize and value the image of God in himself,—doth most love others in whom it is. And we may know whether we cherish and improve grace in our own hearts, by that love which we have unto them in whom it doth manifest itself, 1 John 5:1.

5. This love in the first place acts itself by valuation, esteem, and delight. So the psalmist affirms that "all his delight was in the saints, and in the excellent in the earth," Ps. 16:3. The apostle carries this unto the height, in that instance wherein "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," 1 John 3:16. For whereas life is comprehensive of all that is dear or useful unto us in this world, what we ought, if called thereunto, to part with our lives for, we ought to value and esteem above them all. It is true, the cases wherein this is actually required in us do not frequently occur, and they are such alone wherein the glory and interest of Christ are in an especial manner concerned; but such a love as will always dispose, and when we are called enable us unto this duty, is required to be in us, if we are disciples of Christ. So are we to prize and value them, as at least to be ready to share with them in all their conditions. For,—

6. This love acts itself by all means, in all ways and duties whereby the eternal, spiritual, and temporal good of others may be promoted. And it would require a long discourse to go over but the principal heads of those ways and duties which are required unto this end. Something will be spoken afterwards to

that purpose. At present I have aimed only at such a description of this love as may distinguish it from that cold, formal pretence of it in some outward duties, which the most satisfy themselves withal.

This is that love which the gospel so earnestly commendeth unto, and so indispensably requireth in, all the disciples of Christ. This, with its exercise and effects, its labour and fruits, is the glory, life, and honour of our profession; without which no other duties are accepted with God.

And the reason is manifest, from what hath been spoken, why the apostle giveth this as a ground of his good persuasion concerning these Hebrews, or that they had an especial interest in those better things from which salvation is inseparable. For if this love in general be so a grace of the gospel, if it so spring and arise from the love of God in Christ, as that there neither ever was nor can be the least of it in the world which is not an emanation from that love; and if in its especial nature it so particularly relates unto the Spirit of Christ, and our union with him; it must needs be among the principal evidences of a good spiritual condition. And the same will yet further appear if we consider the grounds whereon it is enforced in the gospel, which are principally these that follow:—

1. As the head of all other considerations, the Lord Christ expresseth it as that which was to be the great evidence unto the world of the truth and power of the gospel, as also of his own being sent of God: John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." It is true, there is another especial principle of the union of believers, as they are one in God and Christ. This is that one Spirit whereby they are all united unto him, as their mystical head. But this alone is not here intended, as being that which the world can no way discern, nor consequently be convinced by. He intends, therefore, their unity among themselves; the life, and spirit, and bond whereof is this love, as hath been declared. There is no other kind of unity which may be among Christians that carrieth the least conviction with it of the divine mission, truth, and power of Christ. For they may be all carnal, from carnal principles and for carnal ends; wherein the world can see nothing extraordinary, as having many such unities of its own. Herein, therefore, doth the testimony consist which we give to the world that Jesus Christ was sent of God. And if we fail herein, we do what we can to harden the world in its impenitency and unbelief. To see believers live in love, according to the nature and acting the duties of it before mentioned, was in ancient times a great means of the conviction of the world

concerning the truth and power of the gospel; and will be so again, when God shall afresh pour down abundantly that Spirit of light and love which we pray for. And in some measure it doth so at present; for whosoever shall consider the true church of Christ aright, will find the evidences of a divine power in this matter. For it doth, and ever did, consist of all sorts of persons, in all nations and languages whatever. High and low, rich and poor, Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Scythians, men of all interests, humours, oppositions, dividing circumstances, at distances as far as the east is from the west, do constitute this body, this society; yet is there among all these, known to each other or unknown, an ineffable love, ready to work and exercise itself on all occasions, in all the ways before insisted on. And this can be from no other principle but the Spirit and divine power of God giving testimony thereby unto the Lord Christ, whose disciples they are.

2. Our right unto, our privilege in, and evidence of our being the disciples of Christ, depend on our mutual love: John 13:34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This especial commandment of Christ concerning mutual love among his disciples is here and elsewhere called "a new commandment." When mankind by sin fell off from the love of God and out of it, from loving him and being loved of him, they fell into all manner of discord and enmity among themselves, "living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Tit. 3:3. And from the same root still springs all contention: "From whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even from your lusts?" James 4:1. In the former revelations of the will of God, as in the law, there was mutual love commanded; envy, hatred, and revenge, being forbidden. But yet there was a great defect and weakness in this matter; partly in the obscurity of the law; partly out of some forbearances which God was pleased to exercise towards that carnal people, by reason of the hardness of their hearts; and partly out of their darkness, that they did not understand the spirituality and holiness of the commands. But the principal imperfection of the law in this matter was, that it gave no example of that love which is necessary to restore us into that condition of the love of God and one another which we fell from. This was reserved for Christ, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Until he set us the example of it in his inexpressible love to us, which is so frequently proposed unto our imitation, we could not know what kind of love it was wherewith we ought to love one another. So saith he here, John 13:34, "That ye love one

another, as I have loved you." See 1 John 3:16. Hence the commandment of love becomes "a new commandment;" not only because it was newly revived by Christ in an especial manner, when the doctrine of the duties of it was cast under Pharisaical corruptions, Matt. 5, and the practice of it in the wickedness of the world; nor only because it was more plainly and clearly given by him than it had been under the law; nor only because he had revealed the love of God unto us; but principally because it was now founded, established, and animated by the example of the love of Christ himself, which gave it a new life and nature, making it "a new commandment." And the first observation of it is the first evidence of the renovation of all things by Jesus Christ. He came to restore and renew all things; but the work whereby he doth it is for the most part secret and invisible, in the souls of men. What evidence and token of this great work is there given unto the world? It is principally this, the bringing forth of the practice of that love, which is in a manner the fulfilling of that original law of our creation which we broke, and from which we fell. For so he adds, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." 'The great example which I have set you being that of love; the new commandment which I have given you being that of love; the design I have to accomplish in and by you being the renovation of love; how shall or can men otherwise know you to be my disciples but by your mutual love?' Without this, therefore, we can no way evidence ourselves to be the disciples of Christ. And this one consideration is of more weight with me than a thousand wrangling disputes that would furiously drive men into such outward forms and compliances as they call love.

3. This mutual love is that wherein the communion of saints doth consist. How great a thing that communion is, appears from the place which the acknowledgment of it hath always had in the ancient creeds of the church. I do not say this communion doth consist solely therein. There belong unto it a common participation of the same sanctifying Spirit, and a common interest in the same spiritual head, Christ Jesus, as to its principles, and common participation of the same ordinances as to its exercise. But herein doth this communion among themselves principally consist. That it hath no concernment in an outward compliance with certain rites and ceremonies, that are invented, not for the life of unity, but for a show of uniformity, I suppose all men are well enough satisfied. But this is the order of the communion of saints: The foundation of it is laid in a joint participation of the same quickening Spirit, and union with Christ thereby; it is acted and exercised by love arising

from this spring; and it is expressed in our joint participation of the same ordinances of worship. Hence it is apparent, that where this love is not, there is no communion of saints, nor any thing belonging thereunto. For our participation together in the same ordinances is no part thereof, unless the influence of our original communion, in the participation of the same Spirit, be conveyed thereunto by love, by which alone it is acted. This the apostle fully expresseth, Eph. 4:15, 16: "But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." There is not a more eminent description of the communion of saints, especially as united in church order, in the whole Scripture. And we see that it begins and ends in love, and so is carried on from first unto last. The spring and fountain of it lies in our relation unto and union with Christ, the head. And we are said to "grow up into him in all things," when we expressly derive all from him and direct all to him; when, in the increase of every grace, our union with him is more express and confirmed, and our likeness with, nearness to him is enlarged. From him, as from the head, the whole body, and every member thereof, have all those spiritual supplies whereby their union with him is expressed, and their communion among themselves is acted and carried on. For the union and communion of the church do not consist in things of outward order and supposed decency, but in the fit joining and compacting of all the members in the same body, by an effectual communication of spiritual supplies from Christ, the head, which do naturally cast every part of the body into that place and use which is designed unto them. But what do the saints themselves, as members of this body? Why, "every joint," every principal person, on the account of gifts, grace, or office, yea, every "part," every member, contributes to the edification of the whole, and the increase of grace in it; which is the end of all this communion. But how is this done, how is their part acted? Saith the apostle, it is done by love. The foundation of it lies in their "speaking the truth in love,"—ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ: holding, believing, professing the truth, so as to exercise mutual love thereby. In whatsoever we manage the truth, in all that we have to do in the profession of it, in speaking, preaching, conference, instruction, it is all to be managed in love to the whole body, or we had as good let it alone. And the end of all is "edification in love;"—that is, either "by love," (ἐν for διά, which is frequent,) or "in love," seeing in the increase or enlargement thereof doth our

edification principally consist. For as "love edifieth," 1 Cor. 8:1, is the principal means of the edification of the church; so it is itself in its increase a principal part of edification. A church abounding in love, is a church well built up in its faith. And this also further evinceth the necessity of this duty and grace. The communion of saints in any thing else without this is a deceitful figment.

4. Without this love we are of no use in the church of God. Some men seem to be very useful by their gifts,—and I wish that none do pride themselves in them, or bear themselves high upon them, for of themselves they are apt to puff us up,—but the very truth is, that without this love, and the constant exercise of it, they are of little or no use unto the true spiritual edification of the church. This our apostle doth not only plainly affirm, but also so largely argue, as we need not further insist upon it, 1 Cor. 13. For he doth not only compare the most excellent gifts of the Spirit with it, preferring it above them all; but also declares that without it no man, by virtue of those gifts, is of any better use in the church than a little "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," verses 1–3. Wherefore we may consider,—

5. That whatever grace any man seems to have, whatever profession he makes, of whatever use he appears to be, if he have not this love, if he live not in the exercise of it, he hath indeed no grace in truth, nor any real interest in the benefits of the gospel. Faith, where it is sincere, worketh by love, Gal. 5:6; and that which doth not so is vain, dead, and useless, James 2:14–17. If we love one another, we are born of God, and know God; if we do not, we know not God, whatever we pretend, for "God is love," 1 John 4:7, 8. And many other considerations of the like nature might be called over; from whence it is manifest what ground the apostle had to lay so great weight as he doth on that love which he had observed among the Hebrews.

I cannot pass by this subject wholly without a little further pressing the necessity of the obtaining and due exercise of this grace. I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that men are harassed continually about want of love, with writings keen and invective; yet little fruit do we see to come thereof. And the plain reason of it is, because the love which men so contend for is confined to that practice in and of ecclesiastical communion whose measures they have fixed to themselves. If you will do thus and thus, go in such or such ways, so or so far, leave off such ways of fellowship in the gospel as you have embraced and think according unto the mind of God, then you have love; else you have none at all! How little either unity or love hath been promoted by such principles and practices is now evident; yea, how much divisions, animosities, and mutual

alienations of mind and affections, have been increased by them. For my part, I should be sorry that any man living should outgo me in earnest desires that all the people of God were agreed and united, as in faith and love, so also in the same way of worship, in all things. However, I know my desires unto that end are sincere. But that there can be no love, or no due exercise of it, until that be accomplished, I am not persuaded, I do not believe; yea, I judge that if ever it be, it will rather be the effect and fruit of love than the cause of it. Let us therefore all lay hold on the present season, and not lose the exercise of love whilst we contend about it. I know no way wherein I judge that any who fear God in the world do walk at this day, that is in and of itself inconsistent with gospel love, or a real obstruction to the exercise of it. If any such there be, it is really to be abhorred. And the more semblance there is of such an evil in any opinion, way, or practice, the more it is to be suspected. But to charge this upon the gathering of professors of the gospel and obedience unto Christ into particular congregations, or especial societies for church administrations, hath an appearance at least of envy, ill-will, and ignorance. For none of the institutions of Christ, such as this is, can, either directly or by any just consequences, obstruct that love which he requireth of his disciples, and which, indeed, they are all suited to promote. And this of particular churches is an effect of the wisdom of Christ, providing a way for the constant and due exercise of that love towards some which is to be extended unto all as opportunities are offered. And those who would persuade us to forsake these assemblies, and to break up these societies, that, returning into the larger communion of the many, we may have and exercise love, do but persuade us to cast away our food that we may be strong, and to throw away our clothes that we may be warm.

Let us, therefore, not wait for other seasons, nor think any outward thing previously necessary unto the due discharge of this great duty of the gospel. We are in our way, let us go about our work. And I shall only at present give a few cautions against the common hinderances of it, because it must yet be spoken unto again immediately:—

1. Take heed of a froward natural temper. Wherever this is predominant, it either weakens love or sullies the glory of its exercise. Some good persons have naturally so much of the Nabal in them, that a man scarce knows how to converse with them. They mingle all the sweet fruits of love with so much harshness and sourness, as makes them ungrateful unto those who most need them. I think it is a mistake, that grace only subdues our sinful corruptions; it will, if cared for and used as it ought, cure our natural dispositions, so far as any

evil or occasion of evil is as it were incorporated with them. If it make not the froward meek, the angry patient, the peevish and morose sweet and compliant, how doth it make the "wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid?" Isa. 11:6. And it is not enough considered how great a lustre is put upon the exercise of love, when it is accompanied with a natural condescension, compliance, and benignity.

2. Watch against the disadvantages of an outward condition. Those of high degree are usually encompassed with so many circumstances of distance, that they know not how to break through them unto that familiarity of love that ought to be among believers. But as the gospel on all civil or secular accounts leaves unto men all their advantages, of birth, education, offices, power, manner of converse, free and entire, so with respect unto things purely spiritual it lays all level among believers. In Jesus Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," but "all are one in him;" and it is the new creature alone that makes the difference. Hence, in all affairs of the church, we are forbidden to have any respect unto the outward state and condition of men, James 2:1–5. We all serve the same common Lord and Master, who, "though he was rich, for our sakes became poor." And if we for his sake lay not aside the consideration of all our riches, with that distance of mind and conversation from the poorest saints, we are not acting as his disciples. I speak not now of the laying out of men's wealth for the use of the poor, but of lowliness of mind, in condescending unto a brotherly communion in love with the meanest of them. Let, therefore, the greatest know, that there is no duty of spiritual love that unbecomes them. And if their state and condition keeps them from that communion of love which is required of all believers, it is their snare and temptation. If they converse not familiarly with the lowest of them as they have occasion, if they visit them not when it is requisite, if they bear them not in their hearts and minds, as their especial church relation requires, they sin against the law of this holy love.

3. Watch against provocations. Whilst we and others are encompassed with the body of our infirmities, we shall meet with what we may be prone so to esteem. Where men are apt to turn every infirmity, every failing, every neglect, and, it may be, every mistake, into a provocation, and to take offence thereat, never expect any thing of love from such persons. For as their frame is a fruit of pride and self-conceit, so it is diametrically opposite unto all the principal actings of love described by our apostle, 1 Cor. 13:4–7.

4. Take heed of resting satisfied in the outward duties of love, without the inward workings of it; as also in an apprehension of inward affections, without outward fruits. Men may have a conviction that all the outward duties of love, in warning, admonishing, comforting, relieving with outward supplies, are to be attended unto, and may accordingly be exercised in them, and yet exercise little real love in them all. Hence our apostle supposeth that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet have no charity, 1 Cor. 13:3. All fruit partakes of the nature of the root. If the good we do in these kinds proceed only from conviction of duty, and not from fervent love, it will prove but hay and stubble, that will burn in its trial.

Κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης. Secondly, With this love, as an eminent adjunct of it, the apostle expresseth the labour of it, the "labour of love,"—κόπος τῆς ἀγάπης. "Laboriosa charitas," "laborious love," saith Beza. "Laboris ex charitate suscepti," Erasmus, "the labour undergone on the account of love;" that is, in the exercise of it. Κόπος is such a kind of labour as is attended with much difficulty and trouble, a "painful labour." A lazy love, like that described by the apostle James, chap. 2:15, 16, and which most men satisfy themselves withal, is no evidence of a saving faith. But we are here taught, that love, if it be true, is laborious and diligent; or, great and difficult labour is required unto love in its due exercise. It is not unto love itself absolutely, but unto its exercise, that this "labour" is required; yet this exercise is such as is inseparable from the grace itself. And this is necessary upon the account of the difficulties that lie in its way, and the oppositions that it meets withal. These make a work laborious and painful. Faith and love are generally looked on as easy and common things; but it is by them who have them not. As they are the only springs of all obedience towards God, and usefulness towards men, so they meet with the greatest oppositions from within and from without. I shall name some few of those which are most effectual and least taken notice of; as,—

1. Self-love. This is diametrically opposed unto it. Self-love is the making a man's self his own centre, the beginning and ending of all that he doth. It makes men grudge every drop of good that falls besides themselves; and whoever is under the power of it will not willingly and cheerfully do that for another which he thinks he can do for himself. This is the measure of self: Whatever is added unto it, it doth not satisfy,—it would still have more; and whatever goeth from it, on one account or other, it is too much, it doth not please. Unless this be in some good measure subdued, mortified, and cast out, there can be no exercise of love. And hereunto "labour" is required. For man

being turned off from God, is wholly turned into himself; and without a holy violence unto all our affections as naturally depraved, we can never be freed from an inclination to centre all in self. And these things are directly contradictory. Self-love, and love of the saints, are like two buckets; proportionably unto the rising of the one the other goeth down. Look unto what degree soever we rise in self-love, whatever else we do, and whatever our works may be, to the same proportion do we sink in Christian love.

2. Evil surmises rise up with no small efficacy against the exercise of love. And they are apt on various accounts to insinuate themselves into the minds of men when they are called unto the discharge of this duty. One thing or other, from this depraved affection which our nature is obnoxious unto, shall be suggested to weaken our hearts and hands in what we are about. And it requires no small spiritual labour to cast out all such surmises, and to give up ourselves to the conduct of that charity which "suffereth long and is kind; ... which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," 1 Cor. 13:4, 7.

3. Distrust of God's promises as to supplies for ourselves. Men are afraid that if they should enlarge themselves in a way of bounty towards others,—which is one duty of love,—they may in time be brought even to want themselves, at least as unto that proportion of supplies which they judge necessary. It were endless to recount the sacred promises which give assurance of the contrary. Nor can any one instance in the whole world be produced unto this purpose. But these are looked upon as good words by the most, but are not really believed. Yea, men are apt to deceive their souls, in supposing they believe the free promises of God concerning grace and mercy, whilst they believe not those which are annexed unto duty. For he who believeth not any promise of the gospel, believeth none. Faith doth as equally respect all God's promises, as obedience doth all his commands. And it was a good design in a reverend person, who wrote a discourse to prove from the Scripture and experience, 'That largeness in charity is the best and safest way of thriving in this world.'

4. Where the objects of this exercise of love are multiplied, weariness is apt to befall us, and insensibly to take us off from the whole. The wisdom and providence of God do multiply objects of love and charity, to excite us to more acts of duty; and the corruption of our hearts, with self-love, useth the consideration of them to make us weary of all. Men would be glad to see an end of the trouble and charge of their love, when that only is true which is endless. Hence our apostle in the next verse expresseth his desire that these Hebrews

should not faint in their work, but "show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." See Gal. 6:9. And if we faint in spiritual duties because of the increase of their occasions, it is a sign that what we have done already did not spring from the proper root of faith and love. What is done in the strength of nature and conviction, however vigorous it may be for a season, in process of time will decay and give out. And this is the reason why so many fail in the course of their profession. All springs of obedience that lie in convictions, and the improvement of natural abilities under them, will at one time or other fade and dry up. And where we find ourselves to faint or decay in any duties, our first inquiry should be after the nature of their spring and principle. Only the Spirit of God is living water that never fails. So the prophet tells us, that "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail," Isa. 40:30. They who seem to be the strongest and most vigorous in the performance of any duties, yet if they have nothing but their own strength, the ability of nature under convictions, to trust unto, they will and shall faint and utterly fail; for that such are intended is manifest from the opposition in the next words: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint," verse 31. If our strength and duties be derived by faith from God, the more we engage in them the more it will be increased. "The way of the LORD is strength to the upright," Prov. 10:29. When we are upright in the way of God, the very way itself will supply us with new strength continually; and we shall "go from strength to strength," Ps. 84:7, from one strengthening duty unto another, and not be weary. But hereunto diligence and labour also are required.

From these and the like considerations it is that the apostle here mentioneth the industrious "labour of love" that was in the Hebrews, as an evidence of their saving faith and sincerity.

Ἐνεδείξασθε. The next thing expressed in these words is the evidence they gave of this labour of love, and the means whereby the apostle came to know it. They showed it: Ἐνεδείξασθε,—"Ye have showed," or "manifested it." The same word that James useth in the same case, Δεῖξόν μοι, chap. 2:18; "Show me thy faith by thy works,"—'declare it,' 'make it manifest.' And a man may show a thing two ways: 1. By the doing of it; 2. By declaring what he hath done. He that works visibly in his calling, shows his work by what he doth; and he who works in secret may declare it as he hath occasion. It is in the first sense that the Hebrews showed their labour of love, and that James requires us to show our

faith and works. The things themselves are intended, which cannot but be manifest in their due performance. To show the labour of love, is [so] to labour in the duties of it as that it shall be evident. Yet this self-evidencing power of the works of love is a peculiar property of those that are some way eminent. When we abound in them, and when the duties of them are above the ordinary sort and rate, then are we said to show them; that is, they become conspicuous and eminent. To that purpose is the command of our Saviour, Matt. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Not only "let it shine," but "let it so shine," which respects the measure and degree of our obedience; and herein are we required so to abound that our works may be evident unto all. If they will take no notice of them for their good, if they will revile us and reproach us for our good works, as though they were evil works,—which is the way of the world towards most duties of gospel obedience,—they themselves must answer for their blindness; our duty it is so to abound in them, as that they may be discerned and seen of all who do not either shut their eyes out of prejudice against what we are, or turn their faces from them out of dislike of what we do. Nothing is to be done by us that it may be seen; but what may be seen is to be done, that God may be glorified. Wherefore these Hebrews showed the work of faith, and the labour of love, by a diligent attendance unto, and an abundant performance of the one and the other.

Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. The end, or reason, or cause of their performance of these duties, which gives them spirit and life, rendering them truly Christian and acceptable unto God, is added: Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,—"Towards his name," Some would have εἰς τὸ ὄνομα to be put for ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, "in his name;" which also may bear the sense here intended. But "towards his name" is more emphatical. And we may observe, 1. That in this place it respects not the whole work of these Hebrews, the work of faith before mentioned, but it is peculiarly annexed unto the labour of love,—the "labour of love towards his name." 2. That it was the saints that were the immediate object of that love, as is declared in the words ensuing, "In that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Wherefore it is a love unto the saints on the account of the name of God that is intended. And this love unto the saints is towards the name of God on three accounts: 1. Objectively; because the name of God is upon them. They are the family that is called after his name. "Of him the whole family" of them "in heaven and earth is named," Eph. 3:15. They are the family of God, or "household of God," chap. 2:19; the "saints of the Most High," Dan. 7:27. The

name of God is upon them; and therefore what is done unto them is done towards the name of God, whether it be good or evil. 2. Formally; because their relation unto God was the reason why they laboured in love towards them. This is that which gives this love its especial nature, when it is exercised towards any merely on the account of their relation unto God, because they are his, because his name is called on them. 3. Efficiently. The name of God is his authority and will. God requires this labour of love of us; it is his will and command: and therefore whatever we do in the discharge of it, we do it towards his name; that is, with a due reverence of and regard unto his will and authority. The whole, therefore, of this duty, rightly performed, begins and ends with the name of God. Hence we may observe; that,—

Obs. III. It is a due regard unto the name of God that gives life, spirituality, and acceptance, unto all the duties of love which we perform towards others.

Great things have been done in the world, with a great appearance of love, which yet have been all lost, as to the glory of God and the spiritual advantage of them by whom they have been done. Some have been lost from a principle of superstition; some, from a design of merit; some, from vain-glory or a desire of reputation, by being seen of men. And many other ways there are whereby men may lose the benefit of what they have wrought. Now, whereas this labour of love is a duty which hath so many difficulties attending it, as we have before declared, it is of the highest concernment unto us to take care that what we do therein be not lost. Unless it be done with respect unto the command of God, and so be a part of the obedience of faith; unless it be influenced with a regard of their relation unto God, and his peculiar concernment in them towards whom our love is exercised; it will not endure the trial, when the fire of it shall consume all hay and stubble. What we do in this kind, is so to be done as that the Lord Christ may own it as done unto himself in the first place.

Again; there is the object of this love in its exercise, and they are οἱ ἅγιοι, —"the saints." And they are considered either as to their general condition and qualification, which is expressed,—they are "saints;" or as unto their particular state and circumstances,—they are such as stand in need to be "ministered unto."

1. They are "saints." There is nothing more evident than that all true believers, and all those who upon their profession are presumed so to be, are in the New Testament styled saints. For ἅγιοι are the same with κλητοί, Rom. 1:7; ἁγιαζόμενοι, Heb. 2:11; ἡγιασμένοι ἐν Χριστῷ, 1 Cor. 1:2. "Saints" are the same with

"called," and "sanctified in Christ Jesus." Every believer is sanctified; and every one who is not sanctified is no true believer: so that "believers" and "saints" are the same. But the atheism of this age hath made it a reproach among many once to use the name; and with some this appellation is restrained unto such as are canonized or deified by themselves. Chrysostom is express to our purpose on this place: Ταῦτα ἀκούοντες, παρακαλῶ, διακονῶμεν τοῖς ἁγίοις. Πᾶς γὰρ πιστὸς ἅγιος, καθj ὃ πιστός ἐστι· κἂν κοσμικὸς ᾖ τις, ἁγιός ἐστιν·—"Hearing these things, I beseech you let us minister unto the saints. For every believer, inasmuch as he is a believer, is a saint. Although he be a secular person" (which he mentions in opposition to their imagination who confined saintship unto monks), "he is a saint;" which he proves by testimonies that they are sanctified. These "saints," therefore, were the disciples of Christ, professors of the gospel; presumed in charity to be true believers, and therefore real saints.

2. They are supposed to be in such an outward condition as to stand in need of being administered unto; they were in some kind of wants or distresses. And such was in an especial manner the condition of the saints at that time among the Hebrews. Their poverty was such as that our apostle in many places,—perhaps in all where the gospel had success,—made collections for them. And as he pressed the Gentile believers unto a contribution unto this purpose with weighty arguments, Rom. 15:25–27, so he looked on his duty herein as of so great importance that he earnestly requests that his discharge of it might be accepted with God and by the poor saints themselves, verses 30, 31. And where any churches had largely ministered in this kind he rejoiceth in it, as that which would tend unto the unspeakable advancement of the glory of God's grace, 2 Cor. 9:11–15. And this duty was the apostle most careful in, as that wherein he gave a testimony unto the change of the church estate of the old testament. All the Jews before, all the world over, did send their oblations in things dedicated, silver and gold, unto the temple. And if they made any proselytes among the Gentiles, the first thing they did was to cause them to acknowledge their obedience by sending gifts to the treasury of the temple; and that this was done from all parts of the Roman empire was known and complained of. Wherefore our apostle thus declares that the old church state was now changed, and that the believing saints were become the only temple of God. And therefore, from all those whom he made proselytes of, or won to the faith of Christ, he calleth a benevolence for that temple, or the poor saints in Judea. This, therefore, was an eminent duty in that place and at that season. For this poverty and these exigencies they were cast under on many accounts. For at that time they were

under great oppressions and devastations, by the covetousness and rapine of their rulers, or the Roman governors of them. And the whole nation was every day vexed by seditious persons, and prevailing multitudes of robbers. And these things were common unto them with others. But, moreover, they were exposed in particular, for the profession of the gospel, unto great persecution, wherein in an especial manner their goods were spoiled, and their persons brought under various distressing calamities, as our apostle declares, chap. 10:32–34. Besides, generally those who gave up their names unto Christ were of the lower sort of the people, the poor among them receiving the gospel. All these things declare their wants to have been great, besides other incidents of life that might befall them unto their distress. These were they unto whom the Hebrews ministered, whose condition put an eminency on that duty.

But it may be said, that if this were their state, how could any of them, or how could the church in general, thus labour in love, by administering unto the wants of others, when they themselves were even overwhelmed with their own? I answer, (1.) We do not, I fear, sufficiently understand what was the frame and spirit of those first believers, and out of how very little of their own they would administer unto the greater necessities of others, that there might be no lack in the body. So the apostle tells us that in the church of Macedonia, when they were under trials, afflictions, persecutions, "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality," 2 Cor. 8:2. In their own great poverty, and under persecution, they contributed largely unto the necessity of others. For us, who are apt to think that there are so many things necessary that we may minister unto the poor saints,—as so much wealth at least, so much provision for our own families, peace and some kind of quietness in what we enjoy,—it is no wonder if we cannot so easily understand what is affirmed of that labour of love which was among the primitive believers. They gave freely and liberally, out of their poverty and amidst their troubles;—we can scarce part with superfluities in peace. (2.) It is not improbable but that there might be some in the church who, escaping the common calamities of the most, were able to contribute bountifully to the necessity of others; and their discharge of duty is reckoned by the apostle unto the whole church, whilst in the rest there was a willing mind; whence they were judged and accepted "according to what they had, and not according to what they had not." And those who have ability in any church would do well to consider, that the honour and reputation of the whole church, in the sight of God and man, depend much on their diligence and bounty in the discharge of this duty. Hence is that peculiar direction of our apostle unto

Timothy with respect unto this sort of persons: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. (3.) The contribution of outward things is but one way of ministration unto the saints, but one part of this duty. There are spiritual aids and assistances, in visiting, exhorting, comforting, that belong thereunto. And herein all may be sedulously conversant, though poor and low in the world. (4.) It is very probable that the whole church was very careful and diligent in looking out for help and assistance, when it was needed beyond what they had ability to supply. And hereby did they no less exercise their love than in what they did personally themselves. For it is an ordinance of Christ, that where churches are disenabled, through persecution or poverty, to minister unto the necessities of the poor among them, they should seek for relief from other persons or churches walking in the same profession of the faith and order of the gospel with themselves. Wherefore, (5.) The intendment of this expression is, that they industriously exercised love towards all the saints, every one according to his ability and capacity; and more is not required.

Lastly, The especial manner of the exercise of this labour of love is called "ministration;" and the especial object thereof is the saints, of whom we have spoken already. And concerning this ministration, the apostle ascribes it unto them with respect unto what was past, and what they did at present; both which were necessary to found the judgment on which he made concerning them: "You have ministered, and you do minister."

Διακονία is a laborious and industrious ministry. And this in the church is twofold: 1. Of especial office; 2. Of common love and charity. The rise, occasion, and institution of an especial office or ministry towards the poor, is at large declared, Acts 6; and mentioned afterwards by our apostle as an abiding ordinance, Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 3:8–13. And this ministration is comprised herein, though not solely intended. For what is done by these deacons, being done in the name, and by the appointment, and out of the charity of the church, is to be esteemed the ministration of the church itself. And though there be a peculiar faithfulness and diligence required in the persons called unto this ministration, yet the ministration itself will abound or be straitened according as the whole church dischargeth its duty. But the common ministration of brotherly love, what every one doth or ought to do in his own person, is here intended. And therein six things may be considered, not here to be insisted on;

as, 1. The root, spring, and cause of it, which is love. 2. The manner of its performance, which is with labour and diligence. 3. The object of it, or the saints in wants, troubles, straits, or necessities. 4. The acts of it, which are many and various; the chief whereof are, (1.) Visiting of them; (2.) Advice and counsel; (3.) Consolation; (4.) Supplies of their wants by outward things. 5. Endeavours in the use of means for their full relief; (1.) With God, in continual prayers and supplications; (2.) With men, according unto our interests and advantages, not being ashamed nor afraid to own them in their poverty, distresses, and sufferings. 6. The rule of this ministration is every man's (1.) Opportunity, (2.) Ability, (3.) Especial call by objective circumstances. But these things I must not here enlarge upon.

This is that on the observation whereof the apostle grounds his persuasion concerning these Hebrews, expressed in the verse foregoing. And herein he gives us the true character of a church of sound believers. They are such a society as, being called into the fellowship and order of the gospel, do walk in faith, expressing it in fruits of obedience, carefully and diligently exercising love towards one another on the account of the name of God, especially with a continual regard unto them who suffer or are in any distress. These are the things indeed which accompany salvation. And we may observe in our passage, —

Obs. I. That it is the will and pleasure of God, that many of his saints be in a condition in this world wherein they stand in need of being ministered unto.

Hereof, as to the distinction of persons, why these shall be poor, afflicted, tempted, tried in the fire, and not others, no direct reason can be given but the sovereignty of God, which is to be submitted unto. And those whose especial lot it is to be thus exercised may do well to consider always, 1. That this will and pleasure of God is accompanied with infinite wisdom and holiness, so as that there is no unrighteousness therein. 2. That they shall not be final losers by their poor, afflicted condition. God will make all up unto them, both here and to eternity. And if there were no more in it but this, that they are brought thereby unto a clearer foresight of, and more earnest longings after eternal rest and glory, they have a sufficient recompence in their hands for all their sufferings. 3. That God might have put them with others into rich pastures here, only to have been fatted against the day of slaughter. Let them but consider how much spiritual and eternal mercies, wherein they are interested, do exceed things temporal, they will find they have no cause to complain. 4. Whereas it is for the glory of God, and the benefit of the church, that some should be peculiarly in

an afflicted condition, they ought even to rejoice that God hath chosen them, to use them as he pleaseth unto these ends. But for the thing itself, the reasons of it are revealed and manifest. For, 1. God hereby gives testimony unto all, that the good things, as they are esteemed, of this world, are no tokens or pledges of his love, and that he hath better things in store for them whom he careth for. He doth hereby cast contempt on the desirable things of the world, and testifieth that there are better things, to be received even in this life, than whatever is of the number of them. For had not God "better things" to bestow on his saints in this world than any the world can afford, he would not withhold these from them, so far at least as that they should be straitened in their want. Wherefore, in this dispensation of his providence he doth testify unto all, that internal, spiritual mercies, such as his saints enjoy, are incomparably to be preferred above all things of that kind wherein he keeps them short, 2 Sam. 23:5. 2. He maketh way hereby for the vigorous, fruitful exercise of all the graces of his Spirit, namely, in the various conditions whereinto the members of the church are cast. And let every one look to it and know, that according unto his outward condition in the world, whether it be of want or abundance, there is a peculiar exercise of grace, unto the glory of God, required of him. It is expected from all that are high or low, rich or poor, free or in distress, not only that they live in the exercise of all grace in general, but also that they diligently endeavour an abounding fruitfulness in those graces whose exercise their especial condition calleth for. And, secondly, we are here taught that,—

Obs. II. The great trial of our love consists in our regard unto the saints that are in distress.—That is the foundation of the commendation of the love of these Hebrews; they "ministered unto them." Either love or at least an appearance of love will be easily preserved, where we have little or no need of one another. But when the exercise of it proves costly, when it puts us unto charge or trouble, or into danger,—as it doth more or less when it is exercised towards them that are in distress,—then is it brought unto its trial. And in such a season we have experience that the love of many is so far from bringing forth more fruit, as that the very leaves of it fall off, and they give over its profession. Wherefore,—

Obs. III. It is the glory and honour of a church, the principal evidence of its spiritual life, when it is diligent and abounds in those duties of faith and love which are attended with the greatest difficulties.

From hence doth the apostle commend these Hebrews, and firmly persuades himself that they were endued with those "better things which accompany salvation." For hereby, as we might show, 1. God is singularly glorified; 2. The gospel is peculiarly promoted; 3. An especial lustre is put upon the graces of the Spirit; and, 4. All the ends of Satan and the world in their persecutions are utterly frustrated.

And these things have we spoken concerning the first ground of the apostle's persuasion of the good spiritual estate at present of these Hebrews, and their future eternal safety, namely, that "work of faith and labour of love" which he had observed in them.

Οὐ γὰρ ἄδικος ὁ Θεός. SECONDLY, The other ground of his persuasion is taken from the righteousness of God: "God is not unrighteous, to forget your work." I intimated before that the word used by the apostle to express the frame of his mind in this matter,—πεπείσμεθα, "we are persuaded," verse 9,—is applied sometimes to denote the infallible certainty of faith, and sometimes the moral certainty of charity. In this place it hath respect unto a double object or reason; first, what was in the professing Hebrews, their faith and love. Hereof he could have no assurance or certainty beyond a moral persuasion, or the satisfaction of a charitable judgment. But on this supposition, his persuasion had another object, namely, the righteousness of God in the stability of his promises; whence he had infallible assurance, or did conclude infallibly, unto what he was persuaded of.

The righteousness of God sometimes denotes the absolute rectitude and perfect goodness of his nature; and hereunto all other acceptations of the word, as applied unto God, are to be reduced. Sometimes the equity of the holy dispensations of his justice, whereby he renders unto every one what is their due, according unto the nature of things and his holy appointments, is so called; and sometimes particularly his vindictive justice, whereby he avengeth sin and punisheth sinners, is so expressed. Sometimes, yea frequently, the fidelity of God in keeping and accomplishing his promises is called his righteousness; for it belongeth unto the absolute rectitude of his nature so to do. So saith the apostle, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John 1:9. The forgiveness of sins is on all accounts an act of mercy, which is contradistinguished unto righteousness in judgment, strictly so called, James 2:13: wherefore that righteousness which is exercised in the pardon of sin, is no other but the faithfulness of God in the promises of the covenant. He hath

promised that "he who confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." Hence it is just with God to forgive their sins who do so. And this is the righteousness that is here principally intended. For the righteousness whereby God rewardeth the works that are wrought in men by his own grace, is the same with that whereby he forgiveth their sins, equally respecting the covenant and the promises thereof: for without the consideration hereof, in strict or exact righteousness could he neither pardon sin nor reward our works; which being imperfect, do no way answer the rule which it doth or can proceed by. In this sense is God here said "not to be unrighteous to forget their work;" that is, to be righteous so as not to forget it. He will have that respect unto it which he hath graciously promised in the covenant, because he is righteous; that is, faithful in his promises. And that no other righteousness can be here intended is evident from hence, because no work of ours doth answer the rule of any other righteousness of God.

Ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ ἔργου. Again; we must inquire what it is "not to forget their work." And this may respect either the preserving of it for the present, or the future rewarding of it.

1. It is not an unfrequent temptation unto believers, that God so far disregards them as not to take care of graces or duties in them, to cherish and preserve them. See the complaints of the church to this purpose, Isa. 40:27, 28, 49:14, "My Lord hath forgotten me," This is here denied. God is not unrighteous, to forget us or our work, so as not to cherish and preserve it. So the apostle expresseth the same persuasion concerning the Philippians as he doth here of the Hebrews: Phil. 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will preserve it until the day of Jesus Christ." He is not unrighteous to forget it. 'God hath in the covenant of grace promised to preserve the faith and love of his people, that they should not perish or be lost. Wherefore, having "begun a good work," and you having made some good progress in compliance with his grace, he is "not unrighteous," so as to forget his covenant engagement, but will preserve you and your graces in you unto the end;'—which is the sum of that great prayer of the apostle for all believers, 1 Pet. 5:10.

2. Respect may be had herein to the future and final reward of the faith, love, and works of believers. For this also belongs unto God's covenant; and it is so of grace, as that the righteousness of God wherein it is due unto us can be no other but that of his faithfulness in his promises. For neither we nor our works are capable of an eternal reward by the way of merit; that is, that the reward should

be reckoned unto us not of grace, but of debt, Rom. 4:4. And that which utterly overthrows such an apprehension is, that God himself is our eternal reward, Gen. 15:1. And I leave it unto others to consider how they can deserve that reward. Whether of these senses he will embrace, the reader is left to determine for himself. The former seems to me more suited to the design of the apostle and scope of the place. For he is satisfying these Hebrews that he made another judgment of them than of those apostates whose condition he had before described. And this he doth on two grounds: first, that they were actually made partakers of sincere saving grace, and therein "things that accompany salvation;" and then, that God in his faithfulness would preserve and secure that grace in them against all oppositions unto the end. Following this sense of the words we may learn, that,—

Obs. IV Our perseverance in faith and obedience, though it requires our duty and constancy therein, yet depends not on them absolutely, but on the righteousness of God in his promises.—Or if we had rather embrace the other sense of the words, then are we sufficiently instructed, that,—

Obs. V. Nothing shall be lost that is done for God, or in obedience unto him. "He is not unjust, to forget our labour of love." And,—

Obs. VI. The certainty of our future reward, depending on the righteousness of God, is a great encouragement unto present obedience.

Hebrews 6: 11

Ἐπιθυμοῦμεν δὲ ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνδείκνυσθαι σπουδὴν πρὸς τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἄχρι τέλους.

There is not much difficulty as to the signification of these words, and therefore both ancient and modern translations generally are agreed in the interpretation of them. The Vulg. Lat. renders ἐνδείκνυσθαι σπουδήν by "ostentare sollicitudinem." But "ostentare" is most frequently used for "ostendere gloriandi causa," as Festus saith; though properly it seems to be a frequentative, to "show often," and is improper in this place. Nor doth "sollicitudinem" well answer σκονδην, which the Syriac renders by ܚܶܦܺܝܛܽܘܬܳܐ, "sedulity," "diligence," "industry." "Studium ostendere," say most, and most properly. Τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίφος. Syr., ܠܫܽܘܡܠܝܳܐ, "ad complementum;" "to the completing" or "perfection of hope." Vulg. Lat., "ad expletionem spei;" which our Rhemists

render by the "accomplishing of hope;" the fulfilling of hope. Beza, "ad certam spei persuasionem;" whereunto answers our translation, "to the full assurance of hope." Others, "ad plenam spei certitudinem," most properly.

Ἐπιθυμέω is "earnestly to desire;" whence is ἐπιθυμία, "concupiscence," "libido," an "earnest," and mostly an "impetuous desire." So the philosopher defined ὀργή, that it was ἐπιθυμία τιμωρίας; which Cicero renders, "ira, libido puniendi:" both from the original derivation of it, a "desire that invades the mind," an "earnest, vehement desire."

Δέ we render "and,"—"and we desire;" "but yet," or "moreover." The same with what is more largely expressed, 2 Pet. 1:5, Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δέ,—"And besides all this," besides what is past.

Ἐνδείκνυσθαι, to "manifest;" that is, evince it unto all by the same performance of duties; that no decay in faith or love might be observed in them, or suspected of them.

Σπονδή is rendered "study," "diligence," "endeavour." But it is such a diligence as hath an earnestness accompanying it; that is, as it were making haste in pressing towards the end and accomplishment of any thing or business. And it doth always denote great and earnest diligence, with study and desire. It is used to this purpose, 2 Pet. 1:5.

Πληροφορία is, saith Hesychius, βεβαιότης, "firmitas," "certitudo;" "stability." It is "plena fides," "plena persuasio," "certa fides;" "a sure, stable, firm, certain faith or persuasion." The Vulgar Latin constantly renders this word, as also the verb πληροφορέω, by some word denoting filling or completing, taking its signification from the first part in the composition. But whatever be the native signification of the single words whereof it is compounded, or with respect unto what allusion soever the signification was first fixed, it is certain that in the best authors, as in the Scripture, it expresseth a full, satisfactory persuasion of mind, or the highest assurance in any thing which, from the nature of it, we are capable of.

Ver. 11.—And we [earnestly] desire that every one of you do manifest the same diligence, unto the full assurance of hope, unto the end.

Although the apostle, in these words and those ensuing, as is usual with him, taketh a prospect towards his farther progress, making way by them and in them unto his discourse concerning Melchisedec, which he hath intermitted (whence some would here begin the third part of the chapter), yet he plainly pursues his former argument, and gives an express account of his whole design

therein. For, first, he manifests directly what was his intention in proposing unto them that terrible commination and prediction concerning apostates, verses 4–8. Although for certain ends he spoke those things unto them, yet he lets them know that he spake them not of them. He thought not that they were such at present as he had described, nor that that would be their future lot or portion which he had threatened and foretold. As he had freed them from any fears or apprehensions of that nature in the two verses foregoing, so in this he declareth what was his certain purpose and intention in the use of that commination. Now this was solely thereby to excite and provoke them unto a diligent, persevering continuance in faith and love, with their fruits and effects; which is the first and principal end whereunto the proposal of such threatenings is designed and sanctified of God. 'All that I have said is unto this end.'

Again; he had newly given an account of his real thoughts and judgment concerning them and their spiritual condition. And upon his satisfaction therein, as that which was attended with "things which accompany salvation," he had given them assurance of a blessed issue of their faith and profession, from the faithfulness of God; making therein an application of the promises of the gospel unto them. Hereon he lets them know what, by the appointment of God and the law of our obedience, is required of them, that they might answer the judgment which he had made concerning them, and be brought unto the enjoyment of the promises proposed unto them. And this was that diligent progress in faith and obedience unto the end which he describes in this and the next verse.

And herein the apostle, with great wisdom, acquaints these Hebrews with the proper end and use of gospel threatenings and promises; wherein men are apt to be mistaken, and so to abuse the one and the other. For threatenings have been looked on as if they had no other end or use but to terrify the minds of men, and to cause them to despond,—as if the things threatened must unavoidably come upon them. Hence some have fancied that they belong not unto the dispensation of the gospel as it is to be preached unto believers; and few have known how to make a due application of them unto their consciences. And it is to be feared that the end and use of God's promises have been so far mistaken, that some have suffered themselves to be imposed on by the deceitfulness of sin, and to be influenced by the consideration of them into carelessness and security, as though, do what they would, no evil could befall them. But our apostle here discovereth the joint end of them both towards believers, or professors of the gospel; which is to stir up and encourage them

unto their utmost, constant, persevering diligence in all duties of obedience. And it is no small part of the duty and wisdom of the ministers of the gospel to instruct their hearers in, and press upon them the proper use and due improvement of the promises and threatenings of God.

In this verse, or the words of it which are an exhortation unto duty, we may observe, 1. The connection of it unto the former discourse. 2. The duty exhorted unto: "The same diligence." [3. The persons exhorted.] 4. The manner of its performance: "That they would manifest" or "show it." 5. The end aimed at in that duty: "The full assurance of hope." 6. The continuation of it: "Unto the end." 7. The manner of his exhortation unto it: "We desire." But though the words may be thus resolved, I shall open the parts of them in that order wherein they lie in the text:—

Δί. 1. For the connection of these words with the foregoing, and therein the occasion of this discourse, in the particle δέ, it hath been spoken unto already. It is not here adversative, but rather illative, as was before declared.

Ἐπιθυμοῦμεν. 2. The next thing occurring in the words is the manner of the exhortation: Ἐπιθυμοῦμεν,—"We desire." Chrysostom is large in this place on the consideration of this word, and the wisdom of the apostle in the use of it. From him Œcumenius observes a difference between ἐπιθυμοῦμεν and βουλόμεθα. For they suppose that the word here used includeth both intense affections, and earnest, diligent, actual desire. And that it doth intend an earnest desire, we showed in the foregoing consideration of the word. And the word is never used in the New Testament but either in a bad sense, to express the impetuous acting of lust, as Matt. 5:28, Gal. 5:17, Rom. 7:7; or a most fervent desiring of any thing that is good, Luke 15:16, 16:21, 17:22, 22:15. And such ought to be the desire of ministers towards the profiting of their people. There will be a dead, cold, lifeless administration of the word, where ministers have not ardent desires after the profiting and stability of the hearers. How were it to be wished that all who are called unto the care and charge of the souls of men would continually propose unto themselves the example of this apostle! Do we think that the care, solicitude, watchfulness, tender love and affection, earnest and fervent desires for their good, expressed in prayers, tears, travails, and dangers, which he everywhere testifieth towards all the churches under his care, were duties prescribed unto him alone, or graces necessary for him only? Do we not think that they are all of them required of us, according unto our measure

and the extent of our employment? The Lord help men, and open their eyes before it be too late; for either the gospel is not true, or there are few who in a due manner discharge that ministry which they take upon them.

I say, without this earnest and fervent desire after the profiting and salvation of our people, we shall have a cold and ineffectual ministry among them. Neither is it our sedulity or earnestness in preaching that will relieve us, if that be absent. And this desire proceeds from three principles; and that which pretends thereto, and doth not so, is but an image and counterfeit of it. And these are, (1.) Zeal for the glory of God in Christ; (2.) Real compassion for the souls of men; (3.) An especial conscientious regard unto our duty and office, with respect unto its nature, trust, end, and reward. These are the principles that both kindle and supply fuel unto those fervent desires for the good of our people which oil the wheels of all other duties, and speed them in their course. According as these principles flourish or decay in our minds, so will be the acceptable exercise of our ministry in the sight of Christ, and the profitable discharge of it towards the church. And we have as much need to labour for this frame in our hearts, as for any thing in the outward discharge of our duty. We must, in the first place, "take heed unto ourselves," if we intend to "take heed to the flock" as we ought, Acts 20:28. And herein especially do we, as we are charged, "take heed to the ministry we have received, that we do fulfil it," Col. 4:17.

Ἕκαστον ὑμῶν. 3. The persons exhorted unto the duty following are expressed by ἕκαστος ὑμῶν,—"every one of you." He had so a care of the whole flock, as to be solicitous for the good of every individual person among them. As our Lord Jesus Christ gives an account unto his Father, that of all those who were committed unto his personal ministry in this world, he had not lost any one,—only the son of perdition, he who was designed to destruction; so our apostle laboured that, if it were possible, not one of those whom he watched over should miscarry. And it is of great advantage when we can so manage our ministry that no one of those that are committed unto us may have any just cause to think themselves disregarded. And moreover, he shows hereby that the argument here insisted on concerned them all. For he doth not suppose that any of them were in such a condition of security and perfection as not to stand in need of the utmost diligence for their preservation and progress; nor that any had so fallen under decays, but that, in the use of diligence, they might be recovered. So should the love and care of ministers be extended unto all the

individuals of their flocks, with an especial regard unto their respective conditions, that none on the one hand grow secure, nor any on the other hand despond or be discouraged.

4. The duty exhorted unto, wherewith we must take,—

Ἐνδείκνυσθαι. 5. The manner of its performance is, that they would "show the same diligence." Ἐνδείκνυσθαι, "ostentare," Vulg. Lat.; that is, to "make show of:" "ostendere," "to show forth," to manifest. "Præstare," Eras., "to act," to perform; so the word is sometimes used: John 10:32, Πολλὰ καλὰ ἔργα ἔδειξα ὑμῖν,—"Many good things have I showed you;" that is, 'wrought and performed among you.' 2 Tim. 4:14, Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ χαλκεὺς πολλά μοι κακὰ ἐνεδείξατο,—"Alexander the coppersmith showed me many evils;" 'did me much evil.' It is so to do any thing, as that the doing of it may be evident and manifest. And the apostle respects not only the duty itself, but the evidence of its performance, whereon his judgment and persuasion of them was grounded. 'Continue in the performance of these duties, to give the same evidence of your state and condition as formerly.'

Τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδήν. And the duty itself he expresseth by τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδήν, —"idem studium;" the same diligent endeavour. Chrysostom much insists on the apostle's wisdom in this expression, "the same diligence;" for by it he both insinuates his approbation of what they had done already, and manifests that he required nothing of them to secure their future condition but what they had already experience of. 'You have used diligence in this matter; continue so to do:' which yet is not so to be interpreted as though the apostle limited them unto their former measures; but warning them to remit in nothing which before they had engaged into, he encourageth them to proceed and grow therein. That, indeed, which the apostle approves in them, and exhorts them unto a continuance in, is the "work of faith and labour of love, in ministering unto the saints;" but here he expresseth the manner wherein they had attended unto these duties, and which they must continue in, unless they intended to desert the duties themselves,—namely, with diligence and alacrity of mind. For such were the oppositions and difficulties that they would assuredly meet withal, as we have before declared, that unless they used all diligence and watchfulness, they would more or less faint in their duty. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. I Our profession will not be preserved, nor the work of faith and love carried on unto the glory of God and our own salvation, without a constant studious diligence in the preservation of the one and the exercise of the other.

The reasons hereof are manifest from what hath been discoursed before, concerning the greatness and difficulty of this work, and the opposition that is made unto it. Our apostle knew nothing of that lazy kind of profession which satisfies the generality of Christians at this day. They can show all diligence in their trades, in their callings, in their studies, it may be in their pleasures, and sometimes in the pursuit of their lusts; but for a watchful diligence, an earnest, studious endeavour in and about the duties of religion, the work of faith and love, they are strangers unto it, yea, cannot be persuaded that any such thing is required of them or expected from them. For the duties of divine worship, they will attend unto them out of custom or conviction; for some acts of charity, they may perhaps be sometimes drawn into them, or for their reputation they may do like others of their quality in the world: but to project and design in their minds how they may glorify God in the duties of faith and love, as "the liberal man deviseth liberal things;" to keep up an earnest bent and warmth of spirit in them; to lay hold on and rejoice in all opportunities for them,—all which are required unto this diligence,—they utterly reject all such thoughts. But what do we imagine? Is there another way for us to go to heaven than what was prescribed unto the primitive believers? Will God deal with us on more easy terms, or such as have a further compliance with carnal ease and the flesh, than those that were given to them of old? We shall but foolishly deceive ourselves with such imaginations. But let no man mistake; these two principles are as certain and as sacred as any thing in the gospel: (1.) Unless there be in us a work of faith in personal holiness, and a labour of love towards others, there is nothing in us that accompanies salvation, or will ever bring us thereunto. Let profane persons deride it whilst they please, and worldlings neglect it, and careless professors fancy to themselves an easier way unto a blessed eternity, this will be found to be the rule whereby they must all stand or fall for ever. (2.) That this work of faith and labour of love will not be persisted in, nor carried on, without studious diligence and earnest endeavours. Now unto this diligence is required, [1.] The exercise of our minds with respect unto the duties of faith and love; 1st. In studying the rule of them, which is the word of God, wherein alone the matter of them all and the manner of their performance are declared; 2dly. In studying and observing the occasions and opportunities for their exercise. [2.] Watchfulness against oppositions, difficulties, and temptations, is also a part of this duty; for the reasons whereof our observations on the preceding verse may be considered. [3.] Readiness to conflict with and to go through the dangers and troubles which we may meet withal in the discharge of these duties. And, as it is

evident, all these argue a frame of mind continually intent upon a design to glorify God, and to come unto the end of our course, in rest with him. That nominal Christianity which despiseth these things will perish with the real author of it, which is the devil.

Again; the apostle exhorts them to show the same diligence which they had done, and which they continued in the exercise of; whence it appears, that,—

Obs. II. Ministerial exhortation unto duty is needful even unto them who are sincere in the practice of it, that they may abide and continue therein.

It is not easy to be apprehended how God's institutions are despised by some, neglected by others, and by how few duly improved; all for want of taking right measures of them. Some there are who, being profoundly ignorant, are yet ready to say that they know as much as the minister can teach them, and therefore it is to no purpose to attend unto preaching. These are the thoughts, and this is too often the language, of persons profane and profligate, who know little, and practise nothing of Christianity. Some think that exhortations unto duties belong only unto them who are negligent and careless in their performance; and unto them indeed they do belong, but not unto them only, as the whole Scripture testifieth. And some, it may be, like well to be exhorted unto what they do, and do find satisfaction therein. But how few are there who look upon it as an ordinance of God whereby they are enabled for and kept up unto their duty; wherein, indeed, their use and benefit doth consist. They do not only direct unto duty, but, through the appointment of God, they are means of communicating grace unto us for the due performance of duties.

Πληροφορία τῆς ἐλπίδος. 6. The immediate end of the exercise of this diligence is, that we may attain εἰς πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος,—"to the full assurance of hope." And three things we must consider, to come unto the mind of the apostle in these words: (1.) What is that hope which he intends. (2.) What is the full assurance of this hope. (3.) How it is attainable in the exercise of this diligence:—

(1.) The hope here intended, is a certain assured expectation of good things promised, through the accomplishment of those promises, accompanied with a love, desire, and valuation of them. Faith respects the promise; hope, the thing promised: wherefore it is a fruit and effect of faith, it being the proper acting of the soul towards things believed as good, absent, and certain. Wherefore, where our faith begets no hope, it is to be feared it is not genuine; and where our hope exceeds the evidence or assurance of our faith, it is but presumption. Now this

hope concerns things absent and future; for, as our apostle saith, 'if we already enjoy any thing, why do we hope for it?' Rom. 8:24. And this is the order of these things:—God hath in his promises declared his goodness, purpose, and grace, in the great things he will do unto all eternity for believers; namely, that they shall be perfectly delivered from every thing that is grievous or evil in sin or trouble, and be brought into the full enjoyment of everlasting glory with himself. In these promises faith resteth on the veracity and power of God. Hereon the soul considereth those "good things" which are so promised, and now secured by faith, as yet absent and unenjoyed. And the actings of the soul towards them, in desire, love, valuation, and a certain expectation of them as believed, is this hope. There may be a pretence of great hope where there is no faith, as it is with the most; and there may be a profession of great faith where there is no true hope, as it is with many: but in themselves these things are inseparable and proportionable. It is impossible we should believe the promises aright, but that we shall hope for the things promised; nor can we hope for the things promised, unless we believe the promises. And this discards most of that pretended hope that is in the world. It doth not proceed from, it is not resolved into, faith in the promises; and therefore it is presumption. Yea, none have greater hopes, for the most part, than such as have no faith at all.

The great use, benefit, and advantage which believers have by this grace, is the supporting of their souls under the troubles and difficulties which they meet withal upon the account of the profession of what they do believe, Rom. 5:4, 5; 1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Thess. 1:3. Hence in our Christian armour it is called the helmet: Eph. 6:17, "The helmet of salvation;" that is, the hope of salvation, as it is expounded 1 Thess. 5:8, "And for an helmet the hope of salvation." And this is because it bears off and keeps us from being wounded with the sharpness and weight of those strokes which do and will befall us, in troubles, persecutions, and afflictions. And hence it is manifest, that a valuation and esteem of the things hoped for are of the essence of hope. For whatever expectation we have of them, if we do not so value them as to find a satisfactory relief in them in all our troubles, and that which may outbalance our present sufferings, our hope is not genuine and truly evangelical. And this was now the condition of the Hebrews. They were exposed unto much tribulation upon the account of the profession of the gospel; and the apostle foresaw that they were yet to be exercised with things more grievous and terrible. That which they had to relieve themselves in this condition, to lay in the balance against all the evils they suffered or had to conflict withal, were the things that were promised by Christ unto them that

believe and obey him. Wherefore, an assured expectation of these things, so infinitely above and beyond what they lost or underwent at present, was absolutely necessary, as to their supportment, so unto their encouragement unto a continuance in their profession. This alone was able to preserve them from fainting and despondencies under a confluence of evils; which also God himself directs unto, Isa. 35:3, 4. Wherefore this duty our apostle frequently exhorts the Hebrews unto in this epistle, as that which was peculiarly suited unto them, and necessary for them in their present condition. And he lets them know, that in its due exercise, it would not only relieve and support them, but enable them, in the midst of all their troubles, to rejoice and glory; as hath been declared on chap. 3:6.

Πληροφορία. (2.) There is the πληροφορία of this hope,—the "full assurance" of it. Hope hath its degrees, as faith hath also. There is a weak or a little faith, and a strong or great faith. So there is an imperfect and a more perfect hope. This "full assurance" is not of the nature or essence of it, but an especial degree of it in its own improvement. A weak, imperfect hope, will give but weak and imperfect relief under trouble; but that which riseth up unto the full assurance will complete our relief. Wherefore, as hope itself is necessary, so is this degree of it, especially where trials do abound. Yet neither is hope in this degree absolute, or absolutely perfect. Our minds in this world are not capable of such a degree of assurance in spiritual things as to free us from assaults to the contrary, and impressions of fear sometimes from those assaults: but there is such a degree attainable as is always victorious; which will give the soul peace at all times, and sometimes fill it with joy. This, therefore, is the assurance of hope here intended; such a fixed, constant, prevailing persuasion, proceeding from faith in the promises concerning the good things promised, our interest in them, and certain enjoyment of them, as will support us and carry us comfortably through all the difficulties and troubles we have to conflict withal. And without this it is not possible that we should carry on our profession to the glory of God and the gospel, in the times of affliction and persecution. For although the least degree of sincere hope will preserve from utter apostasy, yet unless it be confirmed and fortified, and so wrought up unto this full assurance, it cannot be but that great and sore trials, temptations, and persecutions, will at one time or other take such impression on our minds, as to cause a manifold failing in the duties of profession, either as to matter or manner, as it hath fallen out with not a few sincere believers in all ages.

(3.) It is to be inquired how the "diligence" before described tends unto this assurance of hope. And it doth so three ways: [1.] It hath its efficacy unto this purpose from God's institution. God hath appointed this as the way and means whereby we shall come to this assurance. So is his will declared, 2 Pet. 1:10, 11: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is the same diligence with that here in the text which is intended, as is evident by the verses foregoing. And this hath God appointed as the means to secure unto ourselves our "calling and election," which the good things we hope for do infallibly accompany. And hereby we shall be carried through all difficulties into the kingdom of God and of glory. [2.] It hath a proper and natural tendency unto this end; for by the use of this diligence grace is increased in us, whereby our evidences of an interest in the promises of the gospel are cleared and strengthened. And herein doth our assurance of hope consist. [3.] By our diligent attendance unto the duties of faith and love, every sin will be prevented whereby our hope would be weakened or impaired.

Ἄχρι τέλους. 7. The last thing expressed in the words is the continuance in this duty which is required of us; and that is ἄχρι τέλους,—"unto the end." For these words belong not unto them that go immediately before, namely, the "assurance of hope;" which some supposing, have rendered them harshly and improperly, "unto its perfection," "the assurance of hope unto perfection," or "until it be perfected:" but the words plainly belong unto the precept itself, "Showing the same diligence ... unto the end." There is no time nor season wherein we may be discharged from this duty; no condition to be attained in this life wherein this diligence will not be necessary for us. We must therefore attend unto it until we are absolutely discharged of this whole warfare. And he who is discouraged because he cannot have a dispensation from this duty in this world, he hath a heart that "draweth back," and "his soul is not upright in him." And we may observe,—

Obs. III. Whereas there are degrees in spiritual saving graces and their operations, we ought continually to press towards the most perfect of them.—Not only are we to have "hope," but we are to labour for the "assurance of hope." It is one of the best evidences that any grace is true and saving in its nature and kind, when we labour to thrive and grow in it, or to have it do so in us. This the nature of the new creature, whereof it is a part, inclineth unto; this is the end of

all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel, Eph. 4:13. Hereby alone do we bring glory to God, adorn the gospel, grow up into conformity with Christ, and secure our own eternal welfare.

Obs. IV. Hope, being improved by the due exercise of faith and love, will grow up into such an assurance of rest, life, immortality, and glory, as shall outweigh all the troubles and persecutions that in this world may befall us, on the account of our profession or otherwise.—There is nothing in the world so vain as that common hope whereby men living in their sins do make a reserve of heaven, when they can continue here no longer. The more it thrives in the minds of any, the more desperate is their condition, it being only an endless spring of encouragements unto sin. Its beginnings are usually, indeed, but small and weak; but when it hath been so far cherished as to be able to defeat the power of convictions, it quickly grows up into presumption and security. But this hope, which is the daughter, sister, and companion of faith, the more it grows up and is strengthened, the more useful is it unto the soul, as being a living spring of encouragements unto stability in obedience. For it being once fully confirmed, it will, on every occasion of trial or temptation, give such a present existence in the mind unto future certain glories, as shall deliver it from snares and fears, and confirm it in its duty. But this also must be spoken unto afterwards.

Hebrews 6: 12

Ἵνα μὴ νωθροὶ γένησθε, μιμηταὶ δὲ τῶν διὰ πίστεως καὶ μακροθυμίας κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας.

Νωθροί, "segnes;" "slothful," "dull." Γένησθε, "sitis," "efficiamini;" "be" or "become," or be made. Syr., וְדִלָא תֶתְקַטַע, "ut non præcidatur," "ut non abscindatur;" "that it be not cut off:" which interpreters refer unto the diligence before mentioned. The translation in the Polyglot renders it, "neque torpescatis," as following the translation in the Jayan Bibles, without choice or alteration. Indeed, קטַע is used sometimes in the same sense with קוּט, to be "weary," to "loathe," to be affected with trouble, Hab. 2:3; whence sloth and neglect of diligence ensues: but its proper and usual signification is to "cut off;" the same with the Hebrew גָּדַע, "that you be not slothful." Μιμηταὶ δέ, "imitatores;" and so the Rhemists render it "imitators:" which being a word not much in use among us, and when it is used commonly taken in an ill sense, "followers" doth better, as yet, with us express what is intended. "Who by faith

καὶ μακροθυμίας." Syr., בְּגִנְּירוּת רוּחָא, "in length of spirit;" "longanimitatem," "patientiam," "patientem animum," "lenitatem;" "longanimity," "patience," "a patient mind," "forbearance." It is plain that the same grace is intended in all these various expressions; whose nature we shall inquire into. Κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας. Syr., הֲווֹ יָרְתֵא דמוּלְכָנָא, "fuerunt hæredes promissionis," "were heirs of the promise;" referring it to believers under the old testament. Vulg. Lat., "hæreditabunt promissiones," "who shall inherit the promises;" which must respect present, sincers, persevering believers. Beza, "hæreditario jure obtinent promissionem." Others, "obtinent promissam hæreditatem," and "hæreditatem accipiunt promissionis;" which Schmidius chooseth as most exact, though without reason. That of Beza is proper, for κληρονομεῖν is "jure hæreditario obtinere." See our exposition on chap. 1:4. We, "inherit the promises."

Ver. 12.—That you be not slothful, but followers of them [their example] who through faith and patient long-suffering inherit the promises.

This verse puts a full close to the former exhortation, built on the description given of unprofitable and apostate professors. And here is withal an entrance made into a discourse of somewhat another nature, but intended and applied unto the same end and purpose. We may therefore consider it as a continuation of the former exhortation, enforced with a new argument of great importance. For,—

1. The apostle gives a caution against an evil or vice directly opposite unto the duty he had been pressing unto, and which, if admitted, would obstruct its discharge: "That you be not slothful." And therein the series of that discourse hath its connection with the beginning of verse 11: "We desire that you be diligent," and "that you be not slothful;" diligence and sloth being the opposite virtue and vice, which are the matter of his exhortation.

2. He gives a new direction and encouragement unto them for the performance of the duty exhorted unto, which also guides them in the manner of its performance. And herein he coucheth an introduction to a discourse of another nature which immediately ensues, as was observed: "But be ye followers."

3. This direction and encouragement consists in the proposal of an example of others unto them, who performed the duty which he exhorts them unto. And as for their direction he declares unto them how they did it, even by faith and patience; so for their encouragement he minds them of what they obtained thereby, or do so,—they inherited the promises of God.

Ἵνα μὴ γένησθε νωθροί. First, The apostle cautions the Hebrews against that which would, if admitted, frustrate his exhortation, and effectually keep them off from the duty exhorted unto: Ἵνα μὴ γένησθε νωθροί,—"That you be not segnes," "molles," "ignavi;" "heavy" and "slothful." He had before charged them that they were νωθροί ταῖς ἀκοαῖς, chap. 5:11,—"dull" or "slothful in hearing:" not absolutely, but comparatively; they were not so diligent or industrious therein as they ought to have been; or the reproof concerned some of them only. Here he warns them not to be νωθροὶ τοῖς πράγμασι, "slothful in works" or working in practical duties. We are slothful in hearing, when we do not learn the truths of the gospel with diligence and industry, when we do not take them into our minds and understandings by the diligent use of the means appointed unto that end. And we are slothful in practice, when we do not stir up ourselves unto the due exercise of those graces, and discharge of those duties, which the truth wherein we are instructed directs unto and requires of us. And this sloth is opposed τῇ σπουδῇ, verse 11,—to a "diligent and sedulous endeavour" in the performance of our duty: "Show diligence, and be not slothful." And this vice our holy apostle, according to his great wisdom and care, frequently warns the Hebrews against in this epistle. For he knew that the utmost intension of our spirits, and the utmost diligence of our minds and endeavours of our whole souls, are required unto a useful continuance in our profession and obedience. This God requireth of us, this the nature of the things themselves about which we are conversant deserveth, and necessary it is unto the end which we aim at. If we faint, or grow negligent in our duty, if careless or slothful, we shall never hold out unto the end; or if we do continue in such a formal course as will consist with this sloth, we shall never come to the blessed end which we expect or look for. The oppositions and difficulties which we shall assuredly meet withal, from within and without, will not give way unto faint and languid endeavours. Nor will the holy God prostitute eternal rewards unto those who have no more regard unto them but to give up themselves unto sloth in their pursuit. Our course of obedience is called running in a race, and fighting as in a battle; and those who are νωθροί on such occasions will never be crowned with victory. Wherefore upon a due compliance with this caution depends our present perseverance and our future salvation. For,—

Obs. I. Spiritual sloth is ruinous of any profession, though otherwise never so hopeful.

The apostle was persuaded of "good things, and such as accompany salvation," concerning these Hebrews; but yet he lets them know, that if they intended to enjoy them they must not be slothful. Sloth is a vicious affection, and one of the worst that the mind of man is subject unto; for where it takes place and is prevalent, there is no good principle or habit abiding. There is not any thing, any vice amongst men, that the heathen, who built their directions on the light of nature, and the observation of the ways of men in the world, do more severely give in cautions against. And indeed it were easy to manifest, that nothing more increaseth the degeneracy of mankind than this depraved affection, as being an inlet into all sordid vices, and a perfect obstruction unto all virtuous and laudable enterprises. But what shall he say who comes after the king? Solomon hath so graphically described this affection, with its vile nature and ruinous effects, in sundry passages of the Proverbs, that nothing need or can be added thereunto. Besides, it is spiritual sloth only that we have occasion to speak unto:—

1. Spiritual sloth is a habitual indisposition of mind unto spiritual duties in their proper time and season, arising from unbelief and carnal affections, producing a neglect of duties and dangers, remissness, carelessness, or formality in attendance unto them or the performance of them. The beginning of it is prejudicing negligence, and the end of it is ruining security:—

(1.) It is in general an indisposition and unreadiness of mind, and so opposed unto the entire principle of our spiritual warfare. Fervency in spirit, alacrity of mind, preparation with the whole armour of God,—and therein girding up the loins of our minds, endeavouring to cast off every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us,—are required to be in us constantly, in the course of our obedience. But this sloth is that which gives us an indisposition of mind, in direct opposition unto them all. So it is described, Prov. 26:15. A person under the power of this vicious distemper of mind is indisposed to every duty, which makes them grievous unto him.

(2.) When it comes unto the height of it, it is habitual. There is no man but may be occasionally indisposed unto spiritual duties. The most healthy and athletic constitution is subject unto the incursion of some distempers. Sometimes bodily infirmities may indispose us, sometimes present temptations may do so. Such was the indisposition which befell the disciples in the mount, Matt. 26:40, 41; which yet was not without their sin, for which they were reproved by our Saviour. But where these things are occasional, when those

occasions are endeavoured to be prevented or removed, persons overtaken with them may not be said to be absolutely slothful. There may be many actual faults where there is not a habitual vice.

(3.) But there is this sloth in a dangerous degree,—

[1.] When this is generally the frame of the mind, when it hath such an unreadiness unto holy duties as that it either neglects them or is cold and formal in the performance of them. This was the temper of Laodicea, Rev. 3:15. She did enough outwardly to satisfy herself, but in such a way and manner as all that she did was disapproved by Christ. Lukewarmness is the soul and form of sloth.

[2.] When persons are generally uncompliant with such outward means as they cannot but acknowledge do contain warning from this and invitation unto another frame. So the spouse acknowledgeth that it was the voice of her Beloved that knocked, saying, "Open to me, my spouse, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," Cant. 5:2. Both the voice, and the love, and the long waiting of Christ, were manifest unto her; and yet she complies not with him, but makes her excuses, verses 2, 3. And the sloth of persons will be reckoned in proportion unto the means of diligence which they do enjoy. Some may not be sleepy, worldly, careless, slothful, at as cheap a rate of guilt as others, though it be great in all.

[3.] When persons are as it were glad of such occasions as may justify them and satisfy their minds in the omission of duties or opportunities for them. This casts off the duty prescribed unto us, Heb. 12:1; which yet is indispensably necessary unto the attaining of the end of our faith. When men will not only readily embrace occasions offered unto them to divert them from duty, but will be apt to seek out and invent shifts whereby they may, as they suppose, be excused from it,—which corrupt nature is exceedingly prone unto,—they are under the power of this vicious habit. Especially is this so when men are apt to approve of such reasons to this end, as, being examined by the rules of duty, with the tenders of the love of Christ, are lighter than vanity. So it is added of the slothful person, who hides his hand in his bosom, that he is "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason," Prov. 26:15, 16. He pleaseth himself with his foolish pretences for his sloth above all the reasons that can be given him to the contrary. And such is the reason pleaded by the spouse when overtaken with this frame for a season, Cant. 5:3.

[4.] When there is a great neglect of our own prayers, when at any time we have been enabled to make them. So the spouse, in whom we have an instance of a surprisal into this evil, prays earnestly for the coming and approach of Christ unto her in the holy dispensations of his Spirit, Cant. 4:16; but when he tenders himself unto her desire, she puts off the entertainment of him. So do men pray for grace and mercy sometimes; but when the seasons of the communication of them do come, they are wholly regardless in looking after them. They put off things unto another season, and meet ofttimes with the success mentioned, Cant. 5:6.

[5.] When, in conflicts about duties, the scale is often turned on the side of the flesh and unbelief. Sometimes it is so when duties are considered as future, and sometimes as present. When duties are considered as future, difficulties and objections against them, as for matter or manner, time or season, or degree, one thing or other, will be suggested by the flesh. Grace in believers will move for an absolute compliance. If the contrary reasons, insinuations, and objections, prevail, the soul "consulteth with flesh and blood," and is under the power of spiritual sloth. And so are men, by frivolous pretences and arguings from self and the world, kept off from the most important duties. And sometimes there is a conflict in the entrance of the duties of God's worship, as praying, hearing the word, and the like. Grace stirs up the soul to diligence, spirituality, and vigour of spirit. The flesh in all things is contrary unto it. Usually to give place unto the flesh, so as to be brought under the power of a cold formality, is an evidence of a prevalent sloth.

2. Although this sloth may have various causes and occasions, yet the principal of them are those which I have mentioned, namely, unbelief and carnal affections:—

(1.) Unbelief is the principal cause of it, as faith is of that diligence and watchfulness which are opposed unto it. Yea, by faith alone are we excited unto the acting of all other graces, and the performance of all other duties. As it is in its nature to quicken us unto them, so it alone takes in all other motives unto vigorous obedience. Wherefore all indispositions unto duty arise from unbelief. This weakens the efficacy of every thing that should excite us unto it, and increaseth every difficulty that lies in the way of it. As faith will remove mountains out of our way, or help us to conquer the greatest oppositions, so unbelief will make mountains of mole-hills,—it will make every hinderance like an unconquerable difficulty. The soul made slothful by it, cries, "There is a

lion in the way, a lion in the streets," Prov. 26:13. And its whole way "is as an hedge of thorns," chap. 15:19; that is, so grievous and troublesome that he cares not to take one step in it. Hence is the opposition in these words, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith," etc. If we grow slothful, it is an assured evidence of the decay of faith.

(2.) Carnal affections do variously promote this evil frame of mind. Love of ease, wealth, profit, pleasure, will quickly make men spiritually slothful. Where these are prevalent, every thing in the way of holiness and obedience is difficult and irksome. Strange representations will be made unto the mind of all duties, if not in general, yet in all instances that offer themselves. They are difficult, or tedious, or unseasonable, or needless, or the loss we make at present may be retrieved at another time. Every prevalent carnal affection will be heard in the case, and hath something to offer to deter the mind from its duty. And the secret aversation of the flesh from communion with Christ in duties works in all of them. Wherefore, if we see a man slothful, negligent, careless in the duties of religion, we may be sure that one carnal affection or other is powerful in him.

3. As to the general effects of this spiritual sloth, they may be reduced unto these three heads:—

(1.) A neglect of known duties, in matter or manner. Known duties of professors are either public or private; and I call them known, because they are both acknowledged by all so to be, and themselves are under the conviction of their so being. But where this sloth is predominant, clear duties will be debated. What more clear duty than that we should open our hearts unto Christ when he knocketh; or diligently receive those intimations of his love and his mind which he tendereth in his ordinances? Yet this will a soul dispute about and debate on, when it is under the power of sloth, Cant. 5:2, 3. And it doth so actually when it doth not take diligent heed unto the dispensation of the word. Wherefore, omission of duties in their seasons and opportunities, whether public or private, whether of piety or charity, of faith or love, or the performance of them without life and delight, merely to comply with custom, or satisfy convictions, is an evidence of a soul growing up under a sinful sloth unto a ruining security.

(2.) Regardlessness of temptations, and dangers by them, is another general effect hereof. These beset us on every hand; especially they do so with reference unto all duties of obedience. In watchfulness against them, a conflict with

them, and prevalency over them, doth our warfare principally consist. And without a due regard unto them, we can neither preserve the life nor bring forth the fruits of faith. Herein spiritual sloth will make us careless. When men begin to walk as if they had no enemies, as if in their course of life, their converse, their callings and occasions, there were no snares nor temptations, spiritual sloth hath possessed their minds.

(3.) Weariness and heartless despondencies in a time of troubles and difficulties is another effect hereof.—And unto these heads may all its particular pernicious effects and consequences be reduced.

And this brief description of spiritual sloth, in its nature, causes, and effects, is a sufficient eviction of our assertion, so that I need to give no further confirmation.

Μιμηταί. Secondly, In the positive direction given, and the encouragement adjoined, there is an example proposed, and a duty enjoined with respect thereunto. The persons whose example is prescribed are mentioned here only indefinitely, "Be followers of them;" which in the ensuing verse he brings down to the instance of Abraham. For dealing with them who greatly gloried in having Abraham for their father, no example more pertinent and cogent could be proposed unto them, to let them know that Abraham himself obtained not the promises any other way than what he now proposeth unto them. And as our Saviour had told them, that if they would be the children of Abraham they must do the works of Abraham, otherwise their boast of his being their father would stand them in no stead; so our apostle shows them the like necessity of his faith and patience in particular. Besides, he was in the next chapter of necessity to prefer Melchisedec, as a type of Christ, before him and above him; and therefore, as he had in an alike case before dealt with Moses, he would take the advantage hereof, giving him his due commendation, that he might not seem to derogate any thing from him. And this he doth in that instance wherein he came to have his greatest honour, or to become "the father of the faithful."

Τῶν. The persons therefore included in the particle τῶν, τῶν κληρονθμοῦντων, are the patriarchs of the old testament. It is true, it is so expressed as that those who were at present real, sincere, sound believers, might be intended, or those who had fallen asleep in the faith of the gospel; but as he deals on all occasions, with these Hebrews, with instances and examples out of the Old Testament, as we have seen and considered it at large in the third chapter, so his immediate

expressing of Abraham as the principal of those which he intended, confines his design unto those under that dispensation. Plainly he designs those whom unto the same purpose he enumerates afterwards in particular, with the instances of their faith, chap. 11. Nor is there any difficulty in the variety of his expressions concerning them. Of those in the 11th chapter he says, that "all died in faith, and obtained a good report on the account thereof," but "received not the promise," verses 13, 39; of those in this place, that "through faith and patience they inherited the promises." But it is one thing to "receive the promises," and another to "inherit the promises." By "receiving" the promises, chap, 11, the apostle respects the actual accomplishment of the great promise concerning the exhibition of Christ in the flesh. This they neither did nor could receive who died before his incarnation. But the "inheriting" of the promises, here intended, is a real participation of the grace and mercy proposed in them, with eternal glory. This they all received, being saved by faith, even as we, Acts 15:10, 11; Heb. 4:2.

Concerning these persons, he proposeth to them the way that they took, and the end that they attained. The way they took was "by faith and patience," or "long-suffering."

Διὰ πίστεως. Some think that here is an ἐν διὰ δυοῖν, and that a constant, enduring faith is only intended. But their faith, and the constant exercise of it against oppositions, are rather proposed unto them under the name of faith. For that by μακροθυμία, a distinct grace or duty is intended, is manifest from verse 15, where Abraham's carriage upon his believing and receiving the blessing is expressed by οὑτω μακροθυμήσας, "after he had patiently endured."

What was that faith, or of what kind, which is here ascribed unto the patriarchs, is evident from the context. For it was that faith which had the especial promise of God in Christ for its object;—not a general, not a common faith, but that which respected the promise given from the foundation of the world, and expressly renewed unto Abraham. Some amongst us wholly deny this kind of faith, and beyond the belief of the truth or veracity of God in general, will not allow an especial faith with respect unto the covenant and the promise of grace in Christ Jesus; whereas indeed there is no other faith true, useful, saving, and properly so called in the world. It is true, this especial faith in the promise supposeth faith in general with respect unto the truth and veracity of God, nor can be without it. But this may be, and is in many where the other is not, yea, where it is despised. This, therefore, was the faith which was here recommended and proposed unto us. The especial object of it was the Messiah,

or Christ himself, as a Saviour from sin; with this especial limitation, as to come afterwards. The formal reason of it was the truth of God in his promises, with his unchangeableness and infinite power to give them an accomplishment. And the means of ingenerating this faith in them was the promise itself. By this faith were they justified and saved, Gen. 15:6. But it may be inquired how this faith could be proposed unto us for an example, seeing it respected the future exhibition of Christ, and we are to respect him as long since come in the flesh. But this circumstance changeth nothing in the nature of the things themselves; for although, as to the actual exhibition of the Messiah, they looked on it as future, yet as to the benefits of his mediation, they were made present and effectual unto them by the promise. And the faith required of us doth in like manner respect the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation; and by his actual exhibition in the flesh is not changed in its nature from what theirs was, though it be exceedingly advantaged as to its light.

Καὶ μακροθυμίας. The next thing ascribed unto them is μακροθυμία. "Patience," say we; that is, ὑπομονή. But these graces are expressly distinguished, 2 Tim. 3:10, Τῇ πίστει, τῇ μακροθυμία, τῇ ὑπομονῇ,—"faith, long-suffering, patience." So plainly Col. 1:11, Εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν,—"Unto all patience and long-suffering." And in very many places it is recommended as a special grace and duty, 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12. And it is often also ascribed unto God, Rom. 2:4, 9:22; to Christ, 1 Tim. 1:16. Μακρόθυμος is properly אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, "longanimis:" or, as James speaks, βραδὺς εἰς ὀργήν, chap. 1:19,—"slow to anger;" opposed unto ὀξύθυμος, "hasty," "soon angry," "bitter in spirit." It is a gracious, sedate frame of soul, a tranquillity of mind, on holy, spiritual grounds of faith, not subject to take provocations, not to be wearied with opposition. Wherefore, although the apostle saith in like manner in another place, that "we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise," Heb. 10:36; yet the longanimity here intended is distinct from it. For as patience is a gracious, submissive quietness of mind in undergoing present troubles and miseries; so this μακροθυμία, or "longanimity," forbearance, tolerance, or long-suffering, is a sedate, gracious disposition of mind, able to encounter a series of difficulties and provocations without being exasperated by them so as to desert, or cease from the course wherein we are engaged. So where it is ascribed unto God, it signifies that goodness of his nature, and purpose of his will, that, notwithstanding their manifold provocations, and, as it were, daily new surprisals, yet he will bear with sinners, and not divert from his course of goodness and mercy towards them.

And with us it hath a twofold object. For, 1. In the course of our faith and profession we shall meet with many difficulties and oppositions, with many scandals and offences. These men are apt to take distaste at, to dislike, and so to be provoked as to leave the way wherein they meet with them. Upon various surprising occasions, they "fret themselves to do evil," Ps. 37:8. So David was ὀξύθυμος, very short-spirited, when, upon the breach that God righteously made on Uzza, it is said that the thing which God had done displeased David. But this is that grace whereby the soul of a believer is kept from taking offence, or admitting sinful provocations from cross accidents, oppositions, injuries, scandals, disappointments. So is the duty of it prescribed unto us in particular with respect unto one another, Eph. 4:2. Besides, 2. There are sundry things in the promises of God whereof believers earnestly desire, if it were possible, a present accomplishment, or a greater degree of evidence in their accomplishment, or a greater speed towards it. Such are the full subduing of their corruptions, success against or freedom from temptations, deliverance of the church from troubles, and the like. Now, when these things are delayed, when the heart is ready to be made sick by the deferring of its hopes, the soul is apt to despond, to give over its expectations; and if it do so, it will quickly also forsake its duties. The grace which keeps us up in a quiet waiting upon God for the fulfilling of all that concerns us in his own time and season, that preserves us from fainting and sinful despondencies, is this μακροθυμία, this "long-suffering" or forbearance.

These were the ways whereby they came to inherit the promises. The heathen of old fancied that their heroes, or patriarchs, by great, and, as they were called, heroic actions,—by valour, courage, the slaughter and conquest of their enemies, usually attended with pride, cruelty, and oppression,—made their way into heaven. The way of God's heroes, of the patriarchs of his church and people, unto their rest and glory, unto the enjoyment of the divine promises, was by faith, patience, long-suffering, humility, enduring persecution, self-denial, and the spiritual virtues generally reckoned in the world unto pusillanimity, and so despised. So contrary are the judgments and ways of God and men even about what is good and praiseworthy. Observe, as we pass on, that,—

Obs. II. Faith and patient long-suffering are the only way whereby professors of the gospel may attain rest with God in the accomplishment of the promises. —It is a sad consideration, which way and by what means some men think to come to heaven, or carry themselves as if they did so. They are but few who

think so much as a naked profession of these things to be necessary thereunto; but living avowedly in all sorts of sins, they yet suppose they shall inherit the promises of God! But this was not the way of the holy men of old, whose example is proposed to us. Some think faith at least to be necessary hereunto; but by faith they understand little more than that they profess the true religion, about which there are so many contests in the world.

This was not the faith of Abraham; that is, this alone was not so. Wherein it consisted, and how it was acted, we shall have occasion afterwards to declare. But what do men think of the long-suffering before described? Their relief against it, is to trust in such a faith as stands in no need of it. For that common faith which most men content themselves withal, seldom or never puts them upon the exercise of patient long-suffering. It is against the actings of a lively faith that those oppositions arise which the exercise of that other grace is needful to conflict withal. And I shall give some few instances of it, wherein the necessity of it will be made to appear; for if I should handle it at large, all the difficulties that lie in the way of our profession would fall under consideration. Of faith we shall treat afterwards. And,—

1. It is necessary with respect unto those reproaches which the profession of a saving faith will expose men unto. It hath done so always, and will do so whilst this world continues. And they are usually cast on believers in so great variety, on all sorts of occasions, as that it would be a long work to call over the principal of them; for they are the chief effects of the endeavours of Satan as he is "the accuser of the brethren." I shall instance only in those of one kind; and they are those which, on their straits, difficulties, and temptations, the world reflects upon, as if their profession of faith in God were vain, false, and hypocritical. When men said unto David, "Where is now thy God?" or 'What is become of thy religion and profession, thy pretended trust in God?' he says it was as "a killing sword in his bones;" it pierced deep, and pained greatly, Ps. 42:10. And it is spoken in the person of our Saviour, "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness," Ps. 69:20. And this was the reproach that was cast upon him on the cross, as the next words manifest, "They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," verse 21. And this reproach was that which we instance in, "They shook the head at him, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him," Ps. 22:7, 8; Matt. 27:43. And what befell the Lord Christ on the cross, teacheth the church what it is to expect under it. In this condition patient long-suffering is our only relief. If that be not in exercise, we shall

either faint and despond, or "fret ourselves to do evil," or say in our hearts, 'We will do unto others what they have done unto us.' But hereby is the soul delivered. It is not made stupid and senseless of the sharpness and evil of them. David was not so, nor was Christ himself; nor is it the will of God that we should put them off with a careless regardlessness. The glory and honour of God and the gospel are so far concerned in them, and God so designs them for the exercise of our faith, as that they are not to be despised. But it will give a quietness and evenness of spirit under them, so that no duty shall be obstructed, nor that satisfaction which we have in the ways of God be any way impeded. And in this case this patient long-suffering worketh three ways: (1.) By committing our whole cause to God; as it did in Christ, 1 Pet. 2:23. (2.) By patient waiting for the pleading of our cause, under a sense of our own sin, and an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God, Mic. 7:9, 10. (3.) By supporting the soul with a testimony of its own sincerity, 1 Cor. 4:3, 4.

2. With respect unto violence and persecutions. These also, that faith which tends to the enjoyment of the promises will expose men unto. And they prove great trials, sometimes from their violence, and sometimes from their continuance. Some come with the fury of a storm, as if they would bear down all before them; such were the primitive persecutions, and that at this day in many places under the papal power. Others, by their long duration in wasting, vexing, consuming troubles, are designed gradually to "wear out the saints of the Most High," Dan. 7:25. And what havoc hath been made in all ages by them, of the one sort and of the other, is known unto all. The number of apostates in such seasons hath for the most part exceeded that of martyrs. And many have insensibly withered and grown utterly weary under troubles of a long duration, when they could apprehend no end of them. Here we have need of patient long-suffering, if we intend to inherit the promises. This is that grace which calmeth and supporteth the soul under all these pressures: (1.) By keeping and preserving it from darkening, disturbing affections and passions of anger, worldly sorrow, carnal fear, and the inordinate love of present things. Hereby "in patience we possess our souls," Luke 21:19; which if disorderly affections do as it were once carry out of our power, and possess the conduct of them, we shall quickly be at a loss in our profession. (2.) By enabling us to take a sedate prospect of eternal things, of the good things promised, and their glorious excellency in comparison unto what here we suffer in, 2 Cor. 4:16–18. (3.) By preserving of us from all irregular ways and attempts for deliverance. For without this grace we

shall choose either not to suffer, and so disinherit ourselves of the promises; or shall not suffer in a due manner, unto the glory of God or our own advantage; or shall turn aside unto unlawful reliefs.

3. It is necessary with respect unto our waiting for the accomplishment of many great promises concerning the kingdom of Christ and interest of the gospel in this world. That there are such promises on record in the Scripture, and as yet unfulfilled, is, I suppose, generally granted. However, I speak of them who are satisfied in their minds beyond all hesitation that such there are; and of such as lived before the accomplishment of some of them, who are proposed for our example. For so did the fathers under the old testament, who lived before the coming of Christ in the flesh. In these promises and their accomplishment believers find themselves greatly concerned; and those who are not so, do disavow an interest in the spiritual body of Christ and his glory in the world. Now, because their accomplishment is deferred beyond the desires and expectations of men, as was of old the promise of the coming of Christ, many temptations do ensue thereon. And not a few have there been on the one hand, who have, in sad instances, made haste and antedated the accomplishment in unwarrantable practices; pretending unto faith, they have renounced patient long-suffering. And not fewer have cast away all expectation of them on the other hand, as though they would never be fulfilled. Herein, therefore, we have also need of patient long-suffering. Without it we shall fall into one of the extremes mentioned, both of which are attended with dangers ruinous unto profession. See Hab. 2:1–4. With respect unto these things, the days of the gospel are the time of "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," Rev. 1:9. He hath begun to set up his kingdom; and it shall never be prevailed against, Dan. 7:27. But yet many things that belong thereunto, especially unto its tranquillity and extent, are as yet unfulfilled; and whilst they are so, many outrages are committed in the world against his rule and interest. Wherefore it is at present the time of his patience as well as of his reign. And therefore are we required to "keep the word of his patience," Rev. 3:10; or to abide in the faith of those things concerning which he exerciseth patience in the world. So is it said with respect unto the judgments which God in his own time will execute on the antichristian, persecuting world, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints," Rev. 13:10. While these things are accomplishing, and until they are accomplished, during that large season until their end be, the saints must exercise patient long-suffering, added unto faith in

the promises, or they will not see the end of them. And this patient long-suffering with respect unto the accomplishment of these promises produceth these four effects: (1.) A quiet resignation of all times and seasons unto the sovereignty of God. The soul possessed of it quiets itself with this, 'It is not for me to know the times and seasons, which God hath put in his own hand,' Deut. 29:29. (2.) A due valuation of present enjoyments; which is especially required since the coming of Christ in the flesh. (3.) A ready application of mind unto present duties, John 21:22. (4.) Waiting in prayer for what we have not yet received.

4. It is necessary also with respect unto our own personal obedience and all the principal concerns of it. There are three things which believers principally aim at in the course of their obedience: (1.) That their corruptions may be thoroughly subdued. (2.) That their graces may be quickened and strengthened unto all fruitfulness. (3.) That, temptations being removed, their spiritual consolations may abound. These are the things which they are continually pressing after, longing for, and endeavouring. And sometimes in some, if not all of them, they seem to have made so great a progress as to be ready for an entrance into perfect rest. But yet again they find new storms arise; corruptions grow strong, and grace is under decays; temptations abound, and consolations are far away. Yea, and it may be they are frequently exercised with these changes and disappointments. This fills them with many perplexities, and ofttimes makes them ready to faint. Unless this patient long-suffering accompany us in our whole course, we shall not finish it with glory to God, or comfort to our own souls.

But it may be inquired, on what grounds and for what reasons the apostle doth propose unto these Hebrews the example of their predecessors in this matter. Wherefore he doth it, or he might do it, for these ends:—that they might know that he exhorted them, 1. Unto nothing but what was found in them who went before them, whom they so loved and admired; and this he afterwards, unto the same end, confirms with many instances: 2. Unto nothing but what was needful unto all who were to inherit the promises; for if these things were required of their progenitors, persons so high in the love and favour of God, unto that end, how could they imagine that they might be dispensed withal as to their observance? 3. Unto nothing but what was practicable, which others had done, and was therefore possible, yea easy for them, through the grace of Christ, to comply withal.

Κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας. Thirdly, The apostle, for their encouragement unto the duties mentioned, expresseth the end which those others attained in the practice of them. Κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας,—"Who inherit the promises." He speaks in the present tense, but principally intends those who lived before, as we have declared. And the apostle here expresseth the way whereby, in the use of the means, we come to the enjoyment of the promises. And this is by "inheritance." We neither merit it nor purchase it, but inherit it. And how come we to inherit it? By the same way as any other comes to an inheritance, namely, by being the true heirs unto it. And how do we become heirs of this inheritance? Merely by God's gratuitous adoption; so our apostle declareth fully this whole matter, Rom. 8:15–17, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." God, by free and gratuitous adoption, makes us his children. All God's children are heirs; he hath an inheritance for them all. This inheritance is promised unto them; and therefore their enjoyment of it is called "inheriting of the promises." Wherefore the grace of adoption is the foundation, cause, and way of our receiving promised grace and glory. And with respect hereunto it is that God is said not to be unrighteous in our reward, verse 10. For having freely adopted us, and made us heirs, it belongs unto his faithfulness and righteousness to preserve us unto our inheritance. Only we are such heirs as have means assigned unto us for the attaining of our inheritance, which it is our duty to apply ourselves unto.

They inherited ἐπαγγελίας, "the promises." Cameron and Grotius on this text observe, that where the fathers under the old testament are spoken of in this matter, there "the promises" are mentioned; but where believers under the new testament are spoken of, there it is called "the promise," in the singular number. I shall not give their reasons why it is so, because they are certainly mistaken in their observation: for both is "the promise" on the one hand mentioned with respect unto them, as Heb. 11:39; and "the promises" frequently with respect unto us, 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Pet. 1:4. Wherefore these expressions are used promiscuously, as is evident by our apostle, Heb. 11:13, 39. Because they all sprang from one original promise, and all centred in Him in whom and by whom they were to be accomplished and made effectual, being "all yea and amen in him;" and because that one which concerned his person and mediation did virtually include all the rest, they are all of them frequently intended and included under the name of "the promise," in the singular number. But because God was pleased to let out, as

it were, sundry rivulets of grace and bounty, originally stored in the first great promise, by several particular grants and instances, partly for the representation of that fulness of grace which he intended to exhibit thereby, partly for the encouragement of our faith, and its direction in the application of the grace promised, on various particular occasions; and because he was pleased frequently to renew the same great original promise, as to Abraham and David; there are many of them, and they are called "the promises:" and, by reason of their union in the same covenant, whoever is really interested in any one of them, is so in all.

By "the promises" here, the things promised are intended. To "inherit the promises," is to be made partaker of the things promised. And the matter of these promises, was all grace and glory. That which is here especially regarded, is their full complement in everlasting glorious rest with God by Christ. This is proposed unto the Hebrews; and they are encouraged to expect it by the examples of those who went before them in faith and patience. Wherefore he requires,—

Μιμηταί. Lastly, That they should be μιμηταί, "imitatores eorum." "Imitators" is not often used in our language; and when it is, it rather signifies mimics, or contains some reflection of blame or weakness, than what it is here applied unto. Wherefore we render it "followers;"—that is, in doing what they did, treading and "walking in their steps," as our apostle expresseth it, Rom. 4:12; as we are to "follow the steps of Christ," 1 Pet. 2:21. It is to think we hear them saying unto us what Abimelech said to his soldiers, Judges 9:48, 'What you have seen us do, make haste and do as we have done.'

Obs. III. All believers, all the children of God, have a right unto an inheritance.—How they came by this right was before declared. It is by that adoption whereby they are made children of God; and all God's children are heirs, as the apostle affirms. And this inheritance is the best and the greatest, on the account of security and value. 1. Let an inheritance be never so excellent and valuable, yet if it be not secure, if a man's title unto it be not firm and unquestionable, if he may be defeated of it by fraud or force,—which things all earthly rights and titles are obnoxious unto,—it takes off the worth of it. But this inheritance is conveyed, settled, and secured, by the promise, covenant, and oath of God, 2 Sam. 23:5; Rom. 4:16. These secure this inheritance from all possibility of our being defeated of it. 2. The value of it is inexpressible. It is a

"kingdom," Matt. 25:34, James 2:5; "salvation," Heb. 1:14; the "grace of life," 1 Pet. 3:7; "eternal life," Tit. 3:7; God himself, who hath promised to be our reward, Rom. 8:17.

Obs. IV. The providing of examples for us in the Scripture, which we ought to imitate and follow, is an effectual way of teaching, and a great fruit of the care and kindness of God towards us.

The use of examples to be avoided in sin and punishment, the apostle declared and insisted on in the third chapter; which we have also improved as we are able. Here he proposeth those which we are to comply with and conform ourselves unto; which afterwards, chap. 11, he further presseth in very many particular instances. And as there is a great efficacy in examples in general,—which hath been spoken unto on chap. 3,—so there are many advantages in those which are proposed unto our imitation in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. For,—

1. The things and duties which we are exhorted unto are represented unto us as possible, and that on terms not uneasy or grievous. Considering all the difficulties and oppositions, from within and without, that we have to conflict withal, we may be ready to think it impossible that we should successfully go through with them, and come off safely at the last. To obviate this despondency is the design of the apostle in that long series of examples which he gives us chap. 11; for he undeniably demonstrates, by instances of all sorts, that faith will infallibly carry men through the greatest difficulties they can possibly meet with in the profession and obedience of it. There is no more required of us than such and such persons, by the testimony of God himself, have successfully passed through. And if we follow them not, it is nothing but spiritual sloth, or the love of the world and sin, that retards us.

2. Great examples do naturally stir up and animate the minds of men, who have any thing of the same spirit with them by whom they were performed, to do like them, yea, to outdo them if it be possible. So Themistocles said that Miltiades' victory against the Persians would not let him sleep. Being a person of the same kind of courage with him, it stirred him up, in a noble emulation, to equal him in a hazardous and successful defence of his country. But then it is required, that there be the same spirit in us as was in them whose examples are proposed unto us. Let the examples of persons valiant and heroical, in their great and noble actions, be set before men of a weak and pusillanimous nature or temper, and you will amaze or affright, but not at all encourage them. Now

the spirit and principle wherewith the worthies of God whose example is set before us were acted withal, was that of faith. In vain should we encourage any one unto a following or imitation of them, who hath not the same spirit and principle. This the apostle requireth hereunto, 2 Cor. 4:13: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;"—'Had we not the same spirit of faith with them, we could not do as they did.' And we may take a trial hereby whether our faith be genuine or no. For if their examples move us not, excite us not unto the like duties of obedience with them, it is an evidence that we have not the same spirit of faith with them;—as the courage of a valiant man is inflamed by a noble example, when a coward shrinks back and trembles at it. On this supposition there is great force in that direction, James 5:10: "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." Let a minister of the gospel who is made partaker in his measure of the same spirit, consider how Elijah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and the rest of those holy souls who spake in the name of the Lord, carried themselves under their afflictions and trials; and it will inflame his heart to engage cheerfully in the like conflicts.

3. These examples are so represented unto us, as plainly to discover and point out where our dangers lie on the one hand, and where our assistance and relief lie on the other. These two, rightly considered and understood in all our duties, will give us the best directions we can possibly receive. When we know our dangers and our reliefs aright, we are half way through our difficulties. When these are out of mind, when we know them not, on every occasion we fall under surprisals and troubles. Now, in the examples proposed unto us there is withal, through the wisdom and care of the Spirit of God, represented unto us the temptations which befell those who are so our patterns,—the occasions of them, their advantages, power, or prevalency; wherein they missed it, or failed, exposing themselves unto the power of their spiritual enemies: and on the other hand, what course they took for relief, what application they made unto God in their difficulties and distresses, and wherein alone they reposed their confidence of success. These things might be confirmed by manifold instances.

4. There is in them also made known what interveniencies and disturbances in our course of obedience may befall us; which yet ought not to make us utterly despond, and give over our profession as fruitless and hopeless. I confess, great wisdom and caution are to be used in the consideration of the sins and falls of the saints under the old testament, that they be no way abused to give

countenance unto sin, either before or after its commission. We know not their circumstances, their light, their grace, their temptations, their repentance, nor what was the indulgence of God towards sinners, before the fulness of the dispensation of grace came by Jesus Christ. But this is certain, in general, that if every great sin or fall, when any is overtaken therein by the overpowering of temptations, were absolutely inconsistent with that course of obedience which leads unto the inheritance of the promises, the Holy Ghost would not, without any particular exception as to their persons, have recorded such things in the lives of them whom he proposeth for our example.

5. The certain end of a course of holy obedience is in them proposed unto us. All those holy souls that are now at rest with God in glory, as having inherited the promises, were some time as we are, conflicting with corruptions and temptations, undergoing reproaches and persecutions, labouring in duties and a constant course of obedience unto God. If, therefore, we follow them in their work, we shall not fail to partake with them in their reward.

Hebrews 6: 13–16

In the close of the foregoing verse the apostle expresseth the end of all his exhortations, what they tended unto, and what would be the advantage of all that complied with them in faith and obedience; and this was, the inheriting of the promises, or the enjoyment of the things promised by God unto them that believe and obey. Of all that intercourse that is between God and sinners, the promise on the part of God is the sole foundation. Thereby doth God express his goodness, grace, truth, and sovereign power, unto men. Herein all supernatural religion and all our concernments therein are founded, and not on any thing in us. And on our part, the inheritance of the promises, in the effects of these holy properties of God towards us, is the end of what we look for and aim at in all our obedience. Wherefore the apostle having arrived, in the series of his discourse, unto the mention of this great period of his whole design, he stays a while to consider and explain it in these verses.

Ver. 13–16.—Τῷ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὁ Θεὸς, ἐπεὶ κατ᾽ οὐδενὸς εἶχε μείζονος ὀμόσαι, ὤμοσε καθ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ, λέγων· Ἦ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε, καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε, καὶ οὕτως μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχε τῆς ἐπαγγλιας. Ἄνθρωποι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὀμνύουσι, καὶ πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας πέρας εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὅρκος.

Τῶ γαο Ἀβραὰμ ἐπαγγειλάμενος. Syr., כַּד מְלַךְ לֵהּ, "when He promised unto him." Vulg. Lat., "Abrahæ namque promittens," "for promising to Abraham." Most, "Deus enim pollicitus Abrahæ," "for God promising unto Abraham;" which expresseth the sense intended: and that word, "when," which we add, is included in ἐπαγγειλάμενος.

Ἐπεὶ κατj οὐδενὸς εἶχε μείζονος ὀμόσαι, ad verbum; "quoniam per neminem habuit majorem jurare;" "seeing by none he had a greater to swear." Vulg. Lat., "quoniam neminem habuit, per quem juraret majorem." Rhem., "because he had none greater by whom he might swear." Erasm., Bez., "cum non possit per quemquam majorem jurare." Ours, "because he could swear by no greater." Ἐπεί, is rather "quum" than "quoniam." To make up the sense, "se" may be added, "none greater than himself." And so the Syriac reads, סָסוּל דְּלֵית הַוָא לֵהּ דְּרַב קָנֵה דְיאסָא בֵּה, "quoniam non erat ipsi qui major præ se ut juraret per illum;" or, in the neuter gender, "majus" and "illud:" "seeing there was nothing to him greater than himself that he might swear by it." All to the same purpose.

Ὤμοσε καθj ἑυτοῦ, "juravit per semet ipsum." Syr., יְמָא בנַפְשֵׁהּ, "he sware by his soul;" which though it may be an Hebraism, yet we shall find that God sometimes in his oath makes mention of his soul.

Ἢ μὴν εὐλογῶν. The Syriac omits the particles ἦ μήν, which yet are the only note of asseveration in the words. The Vulg. Lat. renders it by "nisi," "unless;" which is retained by Erasmus; the sense whereof we shall afterwards inquire into. "Certe," "surely," Arab.,—"I have sworn assuredly:" "benedicens," or "benedicendo benedicam;" "blessing I will bless."

Μακροθυμήσας. Syr., אֲנַר רוּחֵהּ, "he restrained his spirit;" preserved himself by faith from being hasty, or making haste.

Ἐπέτυχε τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, "adeptus est," "nactus est," "assequutus est," "obtinuit," "consecutus est;" all which words are used by interpreters. Syr., קַבֵּל, "he received;" "promissum," "promissionem," "repromissionem;" "he obtained the promise."

Ἄνθρωποι. Syr., בְּנֵי נָשָׁא, "the eons of men;" men of all sorts. Κωτὰ τῶμείζονος. Vulg. Lat., "per majorem sui." "Sui" is added if not needlessly, yet barbarously.

Ἀντιλογίας, "contradictionis," "controversiæ," "litis," "contentions;" "strife." Πέρας, "finis;" rather as Bez., "terminus." Εἰς βεζαίωσιν ὁ ὅρκος, "ad confirmationem;" Eras., "ad confirmandum;" "juramentum," "jusjurandum,"

"adhibitum." Syr., שׁוּלְמָא שַׁרִירָא בְּמַוְמָתָא הֲוֵא לֵהּ, "the true solution of every contention between them is by an oath." Arab., "a lawful oath is the decision of every controversy between them."

Ver. 13–16.—For when God made promise to Abraham, [God promising unto Abraham,] because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee; and so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Γάρ. Γάρ, "for." Expositors agree that this causal connection doth not infer a reason or enforcement of the preceding exhortation unto faith, and directly; but it gives an account wherefore he proposed unto them the examples of their forefathers, as those who through faith and patience inherited the promises. For that they did so really and truly, he proves by an instance above all exception, producing the example of one which he knew would be most forcible and prevalent with them: 'It is evident that they by faith and patience obtained the promise, for so did Abraham;' the grounds whereof he particularly declares.

But this, in my judgment, compriseth not the whole scope and design of the apostle in the introduction of this example. He hath yet a farther aim in it, which we must inquire into. Wherefore, 1. Having carried on his parenetical discourse concerning fruitfulness in profession, with constancy in faith and patience, unto a declaration of the end of all graces and duties, which is the enjoyment of the promise, he takes occasion thence to declare unto them the nature of the gospel, and the mediation of Christ therein proposed unto them, unto constancy in the faith and profession whereof he had so exhorted them. To this end he lets them know, that they were nothing but the accomplishment of the great promise made unto Abraham; which as themselves acknowledged to be the foundation of all their hopes and expectations, so also that it had not been before perfectly fulfilled. In that promise both the great blessing of Christ himself and the whole work of his mediation were included. Wherefore on this account doth he insist so largely on this promise, and the confirmation of it, and issueth his discourse in the introduction of Christ according unto it. 2. He further designs to manifest, that the promise, as to the substance of it, belongs no less unto all believers than it did to Abraham, and that all the benefits contained therein are by the oath of God secured unto them all.

There is in the words, observing as near as we can their order in the text, in the distribution, 1. The person unto whom the promises were made, and who is proposed for the example of the Hebrews; which is Abraham. 2. The promise made unto him; which is that of Christ himself and the benefits of his mediation. 3. The confirmation of that promise by the oath of God; "God sware." 4. The especial nature of that oath; "God sware by himself." 5. The reason hereof; because he had none greater by whom he might swear. 6. The end of the whole on the part of Abraham; he obtained the promise by patient waiting, or enduring. 7. The assurance of the promise on the part of God as confirmed by his oath, by a general maxim of things among men, grounded on the light of nature and received in their universal practice; "for verily men swear by the greater," etc.

Τῷ Ἀβραάμ. First, The person to whom the promise was made is "Abraham." He was originally called "Abram," אַבְרָם,—"pater excelsus," "a high" or "exalted father." God changed his name, upon the most signal renovation of the covenant with him, into אַבְרָהָם, "Abraham," Gen. 17:5. The reason and added signification whereof are given in the next words, "For a father of many nations have I made thee,"—כִּי אַב־הֲמוֹן גּוֹיִם נְתַתִּיךָ. הֲמוֹן is a "multitude;" and God now declaring that Abraham should not only be the father of all the nations that should proceed naturally from his loins, but of all the nations of the world that should afterwards embrace and imitate his faith, interserts the first letter of הֲמוֹן, a "multitude," into his name; that it might be unto him a perpetual memorial of the grace and favour of God, as also a continual confirmation of his faith in the promises, the truth and power of God being always suggested unto him by the name that he had given him.

Now Abraham was the most meet, on many accounts, to be proposed as an example unto this people. For, 1. Naturally he was the head of their families,—their first, peculiar, famous progenitor, in whose person that distinction from the rest of the world began which they continued in throughout all their generations; and all men are wont to pay a great reverence and respect to such persons. 2. It was he who as it were got them their inheritance, which was first conveyed unto him, and they came in upon his right. 3. Because the promise, now accomplished, was first signally given unto him, and therein the gospel declared, in the faith whereof they are now exhorted to persevere. 4. The

promise was not given him merely on his own account, or for his own sake, but he was singled out as a pattern and example for all believers. And hence he became the "father of the faithful," and "heir of the world."

Ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὁ Θεός. Secondly, That which is affirmed concerning this person is, that "God made promise unto him,"—ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὁ Θεός. Of the nature of divine promises I have treated, chap. 4:1, 2. In general, they are express declarations of the grace, goodness, pleasure, and purpose of God towards men, for their good and advantage. That here intended was that, for the substance of it, which God made unto Abraham, Gen. 12:2, 3: "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And this same promise was confirmed unto him by the way of a covenant, chap. 15:3–5; and more solemnly, chap. 17:1–6. For chap. 15, it is only promised that he should have a natural seed of his own, and that a stranger should not be his heir; but here [chap. 17] his name is changed into "Abraham," he is made "heir of the world," and "many nations" are given to be his spiritual posterity. But because, together with the promise, our apostle designs to give an account and commendation both of the faith and obedience of Abraham, he calls not out that grant of this promise which was preventing, renewing, and calling, antecedent unto all his faith and obedience, and communicative of all the grace whereby he was enabled thereunto, as expressed chap. 12; but he takes it from that place where it was renewed and established unto him after he had given the last and greatest evidence of his faith, love, and obedience, chap. 22:16–18: בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי,—"By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son," כִּי־ בָרֵךְ אֲבָרֶכְךָ וְהַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ,—"that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed." Thus God gave out unto him the fulness of the promise by degrees. First he mentions only his own person, without any declaration how the promise should be fulfilled in his seed, chap. 12:2, 3; then he expressly adds the mention of his seed, in the way whereby the promise should be accomplished, but no more, chap. 15:5; and at length he lets him know the extent of his seed, unto believers of all nations, chap. 17:5. To all which a further confirmation by the oath of God, and the extent of the promise, are added, chap. 22:15–18. So are we to embrace and improve, as he did, the first dawnings of divine love and grace. It is not full assurance that we are first to look after, but we are to wait for the confirmation of our faith, in compliance with what we have received. If we either value not, or improve not in thankful obedience, the

first intimations of grace, we shall make no progress towards greater enjoyments. And in the apostle's expression of this promise we may consider,—1. The manner of the expression; 2. The nature and concernments of the promise itself.

Ἢ μήν. 1. In the manner of the expression there are the affirmative particles, ᾗ μήν,—"certe," "truly." They answer only directly unto כִּי in the Hebrew; but the apostle includes a respect unto what was said before, בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי,—"In myself have I sworn." And כִּי is sometimes used for אָכֵן, that is, "truly," in way of an asseveration: Job 34:31, כִּי אֶל־אֵל הֶאָמַר נָשָׂאתִי לֹא אֶחְבֹּל; which we render, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne, I will not offend;" and that properly. And ᾗ μήν was of common use in the Greek tongue in assertory oaths. So Demosthenes, Ὤμνυε ᾗ μὴν ἀπολωλέναι Φίλιππον,—"He sware (ᾗ μήν) that he would destroy Philip." The Vulgar Latin renders it by "nisi;" that is, εἰ μή, contrary to the sense of the ancients, Chrysostom, Œcumenius, and Theophylact, as some of the expositors of the Roman church do acknowledge. But yet that manner of expression denotes a sense not unusual in the Scripture; for there is an intimation in it of a reserved condition, rendering the saying ensuing a most sacred oath: 'Unless I bless thee, let me not be trusted in as God,' or the like. But the formality of the oath of God is neither in Genesis nor here expressed; only respect is had unto what he affirms, "By myself have I sworn." 'Surely,' 'undoubtedly.'

The promise itself is expressed in these words, Εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε, etc., —"Blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." Our apostle renders the words of Moses exactly, Gen. 22:17. Only, while it is said there, "I will multiply thy seed," he expresseth it by "I will multiply thee;" which is all one, or to the same purpose, for he could be no way multiplied but in his seed: and he proceedeth no farther with the words of the promise, as being not concerned in what followeth. For although his seed was actually multiplied, yet it was Abraham himself who was blessed therein. The Vulgar Latin in this place reads, "benedicens benedicam," "blessing I will bless;" but in Genesis it hath only "benedicam" and "multiplicabo." Hence divers of the Roman expositors, as Ribera, Tena, and others, give sundry reasons why the apostle changed the expression from what was used in Moses, where it is only said, "I will bless thee," into "blessing I will bless thee." And, which I cannot but observe, Schlichtingius, who followeth in this place the exposition of Ribera, complies with him also in that observation: "Aliis quidem verbis," saith he,

"promissionem hanc apud Mosem extulit." But all this is but the mistake of the Vulgar interpreter on Gen. 22: for the words in the original have the reduplication rendered by the apostle; which the LXX. also observe. And this reduplication is a pure Hebraism, vehemently affirming the thing promised, and hath in it the nature of an oath. It also intends and extends the matter promised: "Blessing I will bless thee;"—'I will do so without fail; I will do so greatly, without measure, and eternally, without end.' And this kind of asseveration is common in the Hebrew: Gen. 2:17, בְּיוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת; —"In the day thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die;" 'thou shalt assuredly die, be certainly obnoxious unto death.' It may be also that the double death, temporal and eternal, is included therein. See Gen. 37:33; 2 Kings 2:23; 1 Sam. 23:22, 23; Josh. 24:10; Jer. 23:17; Dan. 11:10.

Obs. I. We have need of every thing that any way evidenceth the stability of God's promises to be represented unto us, for the encouragement and confirmation of our faith.

As God redoubled the word at the first giving out of the promise unto Abraham, for the strengthening of his faith, so is the same here expressed by the apostle, that it might have the same effect upon us. And two things especially God seems to impress upon our minds in this vehemency of expression: (1.) The sincerity of his intentions, without reserve. (2.) The stability of his purposes, without alteration and change. It is to signify both these, that such emphatical, vehement expressions are used even among men; and both these unbelief is apt to question in God. "He that believeth not God, maketh him a liar," 1 John 5:10. He is a liar, who in his promises intendeth not what his words signify, but hath other reserves in his mind; and he who, having promised, changeth without cause. Both these doth unbelief impute to God; which makes it a sin of so heinous a nature. The first time God used this kind of reduplication, it was in his threatening of death unto the transgression of the command, Gen. 2:17, "In the day thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die." And that which Satan deluded our first parents by, was in persuading them that there was not sincerity in what God had said, but that he had reserved to himself that it should be otherwise. The serpent said unto the woman, לֹא מוֹת תְּמֻתוּן, —"Dying ye shall not die," Gen. 3:4. But this being directly contrary unto what God had expressly affirmed, how could Satan imagine that the woman would immediately consent unto him, against the express words of God? Wherefore he useth this artifice to prevail with her, that although God had spoken those words, yet he had a reserve to himself that it should not be unto them indeed as

he had spoken, verse 5. By these means unbelief entered into the world, and hath ever since wrought effectually in the same kind. There is no promise of God so plainly expressed, but unbelief is ready to suggest innumerable exceptions why it should have such reserves accompanying of it as that it doth not belong unto us. Most of these exceptions we gather from ourselves; and were it not for them we suppose we could believe the promise well enough. But the truth is, when we are called to believe, when it is our duty so to do, when we pretend that we are willing and desirous to do so were it not for such and such things in ourselves, it is the sincerity of God in his promises we call in question; and we think that although he proposeth the promise unto us, and commandeth us to believe, yet it is not his intention and purpose that we should do so, or that we should be made partakers of the good things promised. By the purpose of God, I do not here intend the eternal purpose of his will concerning the effects and events of things, about which we are called to exercise neither faith nor unbelief, until they are manifested. But the whole rule of our duty is in God's command; and the faith required of us consists in this, that if we comply with what God prescribeth, we shall enjoy what he promiseth,—if we believe, we shall be saved. And herein to question the truth or sincerity of God, is a high effect of unbelief. This distrust, therefore, God removes by the reduplication of the word of the promise, that we might know he was in good earnest in what he expressed. The like may be spoken concerning the stability of the promises, with respect unto change; which because it must be particularly afterwards spoken unto, shall be here omitted. And these things we have need of. If we think otherwise, we know little of the nature of faith or unbelief, of our own weakness, the efficacy of the deceits of Satan, or the manifold oppositions which rise up against believing.

2. For the promise itself here intended, or the matter of it, it may be considered two ways: (1.) As it was personal unto Abraham, or as the person of Abraham was peculiarly concerned therein; (2.) As it regards all the elect of God and their interest in it, of whom he was the representative:—

(1.) As this promise was made personally unto Abraham, it may be considered, [1.] With respect unto what was carnal, temporal, and typical; [2.] Unto what was spiritual and eternal, typed out by those other things:—

[1.] As unto what was carnal and typical, the things in it may be referred unto two heads: 1st. His own temporal prosperity in this world. God's blessing is always תוספת טובה,—an "addition of good" unto him that is blessed. So it is said, Gen. 24:1, "The LORD had blessed Abraham in all things;" which is

explained verse 35, in the words of his servant, "The LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold." God increased him in wealth, riches, and power, until he was esteemed as "a mighty prince" by the people among whom he dwelt, Gen. 23:6. And this in the blessing was a type and pledge of that full administration of grace and spiritual things which was principally intended. 2dly. What concerned his posterity, wherein he was blessed. And herein two things were in the promise, both expressed at large: (1st.) The greatness of their number; they were to be "as the stars of heaven," or as "the sand by the sea-shore," that is, innumerable. (2dly.) Their success and prosperity; that "they should possess the gates of their enemies,"—which principally respected the mighty successes which they had, and conquests which they made under the conduct of Joshua, and afterwards of David. In both these things were they typical of the more numerous subjects of the kingdom of Christ, and of his spiritual conquest for them and in them of all their spiritual adversaries. See Luke 1:70–75.

In these two branches of the promise the faith of Abraham was greatly exercised, as unto the accomplishment of them. For as unto the first, or multiplication of his posterity, though he lived after this about seventy years, yet he never saw any more than two persons, Isaac and Jacob, that were interested in this promise. For although he had other children and posterity by them, yet "in Isaac only was his seed to be called," as to this promise. He had, therefore, during his own days, no outward, visible pledge or appearance of its accomplishment; and yet, however, he lived and died in the faith thereof. And as unto the latter, of their prosperity and success, he was told before that they should be in affliction and bondage for four hundred years. Yet, looking by faith through all these difficulties, in its proper season he inherited the promise.

And he was a great example herein unto all believers under the new testament; for there are many promises remaining as yet unaccomplished, and which at present, as in other ages, seem not only to be remote from, but, as unto all outward means, to be cast under an impossibility of accomplishment. Such are those concerning the calling of the Jews, the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles, with the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of Christ in this world. Concerning all these things, some are apt to despond, some irregularly to make haste, and some to reject and despise them. But the faith of Abraham would give us present satisfaction in these things, and assured expectation of their accomplishment in their proper season.

[2.] The peculiar interest of Abraham in this promise as to the spiritual part of it may also be considered; and hereof in like manner there were two parts:—

1st. That the Lord Christ should come of his seed according to the flesh. And he was the first person in the world, after our first parents, to whom in the order of nature it was necessary, to whom the promise of the Messiah to spring from him was confirmed. It was afterwards once more so confirmed unto David; whence, in his genealogy, he is said in a peculiar manner to be "the son of David, the son of Abraham." For unto these two persons alone was the promise confirmed. And therefore is he said in one place to be "the seed of David according to the flesh," Rom. 1:3; and in another, to have "taken on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. 2:16. Herein lay Abraham's peculiar interest in the spiritual part of this promise, he was the first who had this privilege granted unto him by especial grace, that the promised Seed should spring from his loins. In the faith hereof "he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced." This made him famous and honourable throughout all generations.

2dly. As he was thus to be the natural father of Christ according to the flesh, whence all nations were to be blessed in him, or his seed; so, being the first that received or embraced this promise, he became the spiritual father of all that do believe, and in them the "heir of the world" in a spiritual interest, as he was in his carnal seed the heir of Canaan in a political interest. No men come to be accepted with God but upon the account of their faith in that promise which was made unto Abraham; that is, in Him who was promised unto him. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. II. The grant and communication of spiritual privileges is a mere act or effect of sovereign grace.—Even this Abraham, who was so exalted by spiritual privileges, seems originally to have been tainted with the common idolatry which was then in the world. This account we have, Josh. 24:2, 3, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood." It is true, the charge is express against Terah only; but it lying against their "fathers" in general "on the other side of the flood," and it being added that God "took Abraham from the other side of the flood," he seems to have been involved in the guilt of the same sin whilst he was in his father's house, and before his call. Nor is there any account given of the least preparation or disposition in him unto the state and duties which he was afterwards brought into. In this condition, God, of his sovereign

grace, first calls him to the saving knowledge of himself, and by degrees accumulates him with all the favours and privileges before mentioned. Hence, in the close of his whole course, he had no cause to glory in himself, neither before God nor men, Rom. 4:2; for he had nothing but what he gratuitously received. Indeed there were distances of time in the collation of several distinct mercies and blessings on him. And he still, through the supplies of grace which he received under every mercy, so deported himself as that he might not be unmeet to receive the succeeding mercies whereof he was to be made partaker. And this is the method of God's communicating his grace unto sinners. His first call and conversion of them is absolutely gratuitous. He hath no consideration of any thing in them that should induce him thereunto; neither is there any thing required unto a condecency herein. God takes men as he pleaseth, some in one condition and posture of mind, some in another; some in an open course of sin, and some in the execution of a particular sin, as Paul. And he, indeed, at the instant of his call, was under the active power of two of the greatest hinderances unto conversion that the heart of man is obnoxious unto. For first, he was zealous above measure of the righteousness of the law, seeking earnestly for life and salvation by it; and then he was actually engaged in the persecution of the saints of God. These two qualifications,—constant resting in legal righteousness, with rage and madness in persecution, than which there are not out of hell more adverse principles unto it,—were all the preparations of that apostle unto converting grace. But after that this grace, which is absolutely free and sovereign, is received, there is an order in God's covenant which for the most part he observeth in the communication of ensuing graces and privileges; namely, that faith and obedience shall precede the increase and enlargement of them. Thus was it with Abraham, who received his last great, signal, promise and privilege, Gen. 22, upon that signal act of his faith and obedience in offering up his son upon God's command. As it was with Abraham, so is it with all those who in any age are made partakers of grace or spiritual privileges.

(2.) The promise here intended, as to the spiritual part of it, may be considered with respect unto all believers, of whom Abraham was the representative. And two things are contained therein:—

[1.] The giving and sending of the Son of God, to take on him the seed of Abraham. This was the life and soul of the promise, the ancient and first-expressed regard of divine grace unto sinners: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" that is, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." The incarnation of the Son of God, promised from the foundation of

the world, shall be fulfilled in thy seed; he shall take on him the seed of Abraham.' So our apostle argues, Gal. 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." For the promise which is made concerning Christ in one sense, is made unto him in another. As to the benefit and effects of the coming of Christ, it was made concerning him unto Abraham and all his seed; but as unto the first grant, intention, and stability of the promise, it was made unto Christ himself, with respect unto that everlasting covenant which was between the Father and him, in his undertaking the work of mediation. Or, the Lord Christ may be considered either as the undertaker of the covenant with God, and so the promise was made unto him; or as the accomplishment of the terms of it for us, so the promise was concerning him.

[2.] The nature of the benefit which is to be received by Christ thus promised; and that in general is a blessing, "In thy seed shall they be blessed." And two things are comprised in this blessing, as the springs of other mercies innumerable;—the promise of Christ himself was the fountain, and all other promises were particular streams from it, especial explications and applications of that promise: 1st. The removal of the curse of the law, which was come on all men by reason of sin. The curse could not be removed but by a blessing; and that which doth it is the greatest of blessings, as that was the greatest of curses and miseries. 2dly. The bringing in of a blessed righteousness, on the account whereof we might be accepted with God. See Gal. 3:13, 14.

Before we proceed we may observe two things in general concerning this promise: [1.] That this was the life of the church of the old testament, the spring of its continuance unto its appointed season, which could never be dried up. How many times were that whole people, the posterity of Abraham, at the very brink of destruction! For sometimes they fell generally into such terrible provoking sins, as that their utter casting off might have been justly expected by angels and men; sometimes they were, in the just judgment of God, given up unto such wasting desolations in their captivities, as that they were wholly like dry bones on the face of the earth, without hope of a resurrection. Yet mercy, patience, and power, wrought through all, and preserved them in a church-state until this promise was accomplished. This it was alone, or the faithfulness of God therein, whence all their healing and recoveries did proceed. And when this promise was once fulfilled, it was beyond the power of all the world to keep them unto their former condition. All depended on the issue of this promise, on whose fulfilling all things were to be cast into a new mould and order. [2.]

This was that which preserved the spirits of true believers among them from ruining despondencies in the times of the greatest apostasies, calamities, and desolations of the people. They had this promise still to plead, and rested therein, notwithstanding all the interveniencies which ofttimes seemed to render the case of that people very desperate. See their faith expressed, Mic. 7:18–20; Isa. 7:13–15, 53.; Luke 1:70–75. And I would hope there is mercy lies treasured in the bowels of this promise, not yet brought forth, toward the remainders of the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh. Who knows but that, by virtue of the engaged love and faithfulness of God, declared in this promise, these withered branches may revive, and these dead bones rise again? Our apostle placeth the hopes of it on this ground alone, that, "as touching the election they were beloved;" they were "beloved for the fathers' sake," Rom. 11:28. As to profession, they were then visibly falling off; but as to election, as to God's purpose concerning them, the love which he bare to their fathers, engaged unto Abraham in this promise, will one day find them out, and bring them in unto a plentiful share in this blessing.

Wherefore, on all accounts, the instance chosen by the apostle was of singular use unto the Hebrews, and singularly suited unto their present condition. For as they received many advantages from his personal privileges who was their father according to the flesh, so they succeeded unto him in the spiritual part of the promise; and therefore, as the like duties of faith, and obedience, and perseverance, were required of them as of him, so they, in the performance of them, had assurance given them in his success that they also should inherit the promise. So the apostle applies his discourse, verses 17, 18.

Obs. III. Where the promise of God is absolutely engaged, it will break through all difficulties and oppositions unto a perfect accomplishment.

No promise of God shall ever fail, or be of none effect. We may fail, or come short of the promise by our unbelief, but the promises themselves shall never fail. There have been great seasons of trial in many ages, wherein the faith of believers hath been exercised to the utmost about the accomplishment of the promises; but the faithfulness of God in them all hath hitherto been ever victorious,—and it will be so for ever. And this trial hath arisen partly from difficulties and oppositions, with all improbabilities of their accomplishment on rational accounts, or with respect unto visible means; partly from a misunderstanding of the nature of the promises, or of the season of their accomplishment. Thus, in the first great promise given unto our parents after the fall, how soon was their faith exercised about it! When they had but two

sons, the one of them slew the other, and the survivor was rejected and cursed of God. From whom should now the promised Seed be expected to proceed and spring? Is it not probable that they were ofttimes ready to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" And yet indeed this, which seemed to overthrow and disannul the promise, was only a means of its further confirmation; for the death of Abel, upon his offering his acceptable sacrifice, was a type of Christ and his suffering in his mystical body, 1 John 3:12. When the wickedness of the world was come unto that height and fulness that God would not spare, but destroyed all the inhabitants of it excepting eight persons, the very destruction of the whole race of mankind seemed to threaten an annihilation of the promise. But this also proved unto its confirmation; for after the flood, God established it unto Noah, accompanied it with a covenant, and gave a visible pledge of his faithfulness therein, to abide for ever, Gen. 9:11–13. For although that covenant in the first place respected temporal things, yet, as it was annexed unto the first promise, it represented and assured the spiritual things thereof, Isa. 54:8–10. This great promise was afterwards limited unto the person of Abraham, namely, that from him should spring the blessed Seed. Yet after it was given unto him, many and many a year passed over him before he saw the least hope of its accomplishment. Yea, he lived to see all natural ways and means of fulfilling it utterly to fail; Sarah's womb being dead, and his body also: so that he was past and beyond all hope of having it fulfilled in the ordinary course of nature. And the faith which he had, or hope, was against hope, Rom. 4:18, 19. Hence he complained, that after all his long and wearisome pilgrimage he went childless, Gen. 15:2; and fell into no small mistakes in the matter of Hagar and Ishmael. Yet, after all, the promise made its way unto its own accomplishment; and, by the signal victory it had herein against all oppositions, assured itself unto the faith of all succeeding generations, as is here expressed by the apostle. Afterwards, when the promise was confined unto Isaac, by that word, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and Abraham was now drawing apace towards the grave, he is commanded to slay this Isaac, and offer him in sacrifice unto God. This indeed was the greatest appearance under the old testament of the absolute disannulling and frustration of the promise. And Abraham had no relief for his faith under this trial but only the omnipotency of God, which could produce effects that he could no way apprehend, as raising of him up again from the dead, or the like. But this also proved in the issue so great a confirmation of the promise, as that it never received any thing of the like nature, before nor after, until its actual accomplishment. For hereon was it confirmed by "the oath of

God," whereof we shall treat immediately; the sacrifice of Christ was illustriously represented; and an instance given of the infallible victorious success of faith, whilst against all difficulties it adheres unto the truth of the promise. What was the condition with the faith of the best of men when the Lord Christ was in the grave? At how great a loss they were, and how their faith was shaken to the utmost, the two disciples expressed unto the Lord Christ himself, as they went to Emmaus: Luke 24:21, "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." And for what they had heard then reported of his resurrection, they said they were astonished at it, but could not arrive at any positive actings of faith about it. And this befell them when they were speaking to Christ himself, in whom the promise had received its full accomplishment. After this, also, when the gospel began to be preached in the world, it appeared that it was rejected by the generality of the Jews; and that they also thereon were rejected from being the people of God. This made a great hesitation in many about the promise made unto Abraham concerning his seed and posterity, as though it were of none effect. For now, when the full accomplishment was declared, and innumerable persons came in unto a participation of it, those unto whom it was peculiarly made neither would be nor were sharers of it. This great objection against the truth of the promise our apostle lays down, Rom. 9:6, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect;"—in answer whereunto he spends the three ensuing chapters. And he doth it by letting us know that the objection was grounded on a mistake as to the persons unto whom the promise did belong; which were not the whole carnal seed of Abraham, but only the elect of them and of all nations whatever. And there are yet promises of God on record in the Scripture not yet fulfilled, that will and do exercise the faith of the strongest and most experienced believers, concerning whose accomplishment our Lord Jesus Christ says, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The faith, hope, and expectation of most, will be at an end before they are fulfilled; and that because of the insuperable difficulties that seem to lie in the way of their accomplishment. Such are those which concern the destruction of antichrist, the calling of the Jews, the spreading of the gospel unto all nations, and the flourishing of the church in peace and purity. These things, as to all outward appearance, seem as remote from accomplishment as they were the first day the promise was given; and the difficulties against it increase continually. And yet, notwithstanding, the promise shall break through all difficulties: at the end it

shall speak, and not lie. "The LORD will hasten it in his time," Isa. 60:22. Before its proper time, its appointed season, it will not be; but then the Lord will hasten it, so that no opposition shall be able to stand before it.

From this state of the promises three things have fallen out: [1.] That in all ages the faith of true believers hath been greatly and peculiarly exercised; which hath been to the singular advantage of the church: for the exercise of faith is that whereon the flourishing of all other graces doth depend. And from hence hath there been a treasure of fervent prayers laid up from the beginning, which shall in their proper season have a fruitful return. In that faith and patience, in those supplications and expectations, wherein in every age of the church the faithful have abounded, with respect unto the difficulties that have lain in the way of the promise, hath God been exceedingly glorified; as also, they were the means of drawing forth new encouragements and assurances, as the comfort of the church did require. [2.] Hence it was that in most ages of the church there have been mockers and scoffers, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as from the beginning of the creation," 2 Pet. 3:4. The fathers were they who received the promises, especially that of the coming of Christ. These they preached and declared, testifying that they would be accomplished, and that great alterations should be wrought in the world thereby. The sum of what they so declared was, that the elect of God should be delivered, and that judgment should be executed on ungodly men, by the coming of the Lord, Jude 14, 15. 'But what now is become of these fathers, with all their great promises, and preachments upon them? Things go on in the same course as they did in the beginning, and are like to do so to the end of the world; what, we pray, is this promise of his coming you have so talked of?' Such scoffers have most ages abounded withal, and I think none more than that wherein our lot is fallen. Observing that all things are in a most unlikely posture, to an eye of carnal reason, for the accomplishment of the great promises of God that are upon record in the word, they scoff at all who dare to own an expectation thereof. [3.] Some, through haste and precipitation, have fallen into manifold mistakes of the promise on the same account. Some have feigned to themselves other things than God ever promised; as the generality of the Jews looked for a carnal rule, glory, and dominion, at the coming of the Messiah; which proved their temporal and eternal ruin: and it is to be feared that some are still sick of the same or like imaginations. And some have put themselves on irregular courses for the accomplishment of the promises, walking in the spirit of Jacob, and not of Israel. But whatever of this or any

other kind may fall out, by the unbelief of men, all the promises of God are "yea and amen," and will make their way through all difficulties unto an assured accomplishment in their proper season.

Thus it is also with respect unto our faith in the promises of God, as unto our own especial and personal interest in them. We find so many difficulties, so many oppositions, that we are continually ready to call in question the accomplishment of them; and indeed few there are that live in a comfortable and confident assurance thereof. In the times of temptation, or when perplexities arise from a deep sense of the guilt and power of sin, and on many other occasions, we are ready to say, with Zion, "The LORD hath forsaken us; our judgment is passed over from him; as for our part, we are cut off."

In all these cases it were easy to demonstrate whence it is that the promise hath its insuperable efficacy, and shall have its infallible accomplishment, but it must be spoken unto under the particular wherein the confirmation of the promise by the oath of God is declared. Again,—

Obs. IV. Although there may be privileges attending some promises that may be peculiarly appropriated unto some certain persons, yet the grace of all promises is equal unto all believers.

So Abraham had sundry personal privileges and advantages communicated unto him in and by this promise, which we have before recounted; yet there is not the meanest believer in the world but is equally partaker of the spiritual grace and mercy of the promise with Abraham himself. They are all by virtue hereof made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," whose is the inheritance.

Thirdly, The next thing considerable in the words, is the especial confirmation of the promise made to Abraham, by the oath of God: "For God ... when he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself." And sundry things we must inquire into in this peculiar dispensation of God unto men, namely, in swearing to them:—

Ὁ Θεός. 1. The person swearing is said to be God, "God sware by himself;" and verse 17, in the application of the grace of this promise unto believers, it is said that "God interposed himself by an oath." But the words here repeated are expressly ascribed unto the angel of the Lord, Gen. 22:15, 16: "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD." So it is said before, verse 11, "The angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham;" and he adds in

the close of verse 12, "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." He is called an angel that speaks, but he still speaks in the name of God. Three things are insisted on to assoil this difficulty: (1.) Some say that he spake, as a messenger and ambassador of God, in his name, and so assumed his titles, although he was a mere created angel; for so a legate may do, and use the name of him that sends him. But I do not see a sufficient foundation for this supposition. An ambassador, having first declared that he is sent, and from whom, may act in the name and authority of his master; but not speak as if he were the same person. But here is no such declaration made, and so no provision laid in against idolatry. For when one speaks in the name of God, not as from God, but as God, who would judge but divine honour and religious worship were due unto him? which yet are not unto angels, however gloriously sent or employed, Rev. 19:10, 22:9. Wherefore, (2.) It is said that this angel doth only repeat the words of God unto Abraham, as the prophets were wont to do. And those of this mind countenance their opinion with those words used by him, verse 16, נְאֻם־יְהוָה,—"saith the LORD;" the words whereby the prophets solemnly ushered in their messages. But yet neither will this solve the difficulty. For these words, "saith the LORD," are often used in the third person, to express Him unto us whom in all our duties we regard, when God himself is introduced speaking. See Gen. 18:19; Zech. 2:8, 9. And he who called unto Abraham the second time, verse 15, is the same with him who first called unto him, verses 11, 12; and he speaks expressly in the name of God: "Thou hast not withheld thy son from me." Besides, in each place this angel is said to "speak from heaven;" which expresseth the glory of the person that spake. Wherever God makes use of created angels in messages unto the children of men, he sends them unto the earth; but this speaking from heaven is a description of God himself, Heb. 12:25. Therefore, (3.) By this angel no other angel is to be understood but the great Angel of the covenant, the second person of the Trinity, who thus appeared unto the fathers under the old testament. See this proved at large in our tenth Exercitation, in the first volume of our Exposition on this Epistle. He it was that spake, and sware by himself; for when a mere angel sweareth, he swears always by one greater than himself, according to the rule of our apostle in this place, Dan. 12:7; Rev. 10:5, 6.

Ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὤμοσε. 2. It may be inquired when God did thus swear: Ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὤμοσε;—"Promising he sware." He did not first promise, and afterwards confirm it with his oath. He gave his promise and oath together; or gave his promise in the way of an oath. Yet are they distinctly considered, nor is

it the mere vehemency of the promise that is intended: for in the next verse the apostle calls the promise and the oath "two things,"—that is, distinct from one another; δύο πράγματα, two acts of God. But although he hath respect principally unto that especial promise which was given with an oath, yet by the same oath were all the promises of this kind given before unto Abraham equally confirmed; whence it may be applied unto all the promises of God, as it is in the following verses. That which is directly intended is that whereof the story is expressed, Gen. 22:15–18, upon his obedience in offering up his son. And this was the last time that God immediately and solemnly made promise unto him, after he had gone through all sorts of trials and temptations (whereof the Jews give ten particular instances), and had acquitted himself by faith and obedience in them all. Thus did God, in his infinite goodness and wisdom, see good to give him the utmost assurance of the accomplishment of the promise whereof in this life he was capable. And although it was an act of sovereign grace, yet had it also the nature of a reward, whence it is so expressed, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son." Of the same nature are all those assurances of divine love and grace, with the peace and joy that accompany them, which believers do receive in and upon the course of their obedience.

3. The expression of this oath may be also considered. The apostle only mentions the oath itself, with respect unto the ancient record of it, but expresseth not the formal terms of it: "He sware by himself, saying." The expression of it, Gen. 22:16, is נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בִּי;—"By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD." And we may consider two things concerning the oath of God: (1.) Why he sware; (2.) How he swears:—

(1.) For the first of these, whereas all the oaths of God are in the confirmation of his promises or his threatenings, the reason and nature of those which respect his threatenings have been declared at large on chap. 3; and that which concerns the promises will return unto us, verse 17, where it must be spoken unto.

(2.) How he swears; wherein also two things are comprised: [1.] The manner of his swearing; and [2.] The nature of his oath:—

[1.] The manner of swearing is twofold: 1st. That which positively expresseth and engageth what is sworn by; and, 2dly. That wherein an imprecation or execration is implied or expressed. The first the Latins express by per,—"per Deum;" the Greeks by μά and νή, to the same purpose; the Hebrews prepose the

letter ב unto the thing sworn by. So here, בִּי; that is, "by myself." Sometimes there is no expression to that purpose, only God affirms that he hath sworn; for he is every way his own witness: 1 Sam. 3:14, "I have sworn unto the house of Eli." So Ps. 132:11; Isa. 14:24. Sometimes he expresseth some of the properties of his nature; as Ps. 89:36, נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְקָדְשִׁי, "Juravi per sanctitatem meam;"—"I have sworn by my holiness." So Amos 4:2. "By myself," Isa. 45:23, Jer. 22:5, 49:13; "By his right hand, and the arm of his strength," Isa. 62:8; "By his great name," Jer. 44:26; "By his soul," Jer. 51:14; and "By the excellency of Jacob," Amos 8:7;—that is himself only; for all the holy properties of God are the same with his nature and being. For that form of an oath wherein an imprecation is used, the expression of it is always elliptical in the Hebrew tongue, whereas other languages abound with cursed and profane imprecations. And this elliptical form of expression by אִם, "si," is often used by God himself: 1 Sam. 3:14, "I have sworn unto the house of Eli; אִם־יִתְכַּפֵּר עָוֹן בֵּית־עֵלִי,"—"if the iniquity of the house of Eli be purged." Ps. 89:36, "I have sworn unto David by my holiness; אִם־לְדָוִד אְכַזֵּב,"—"if I lie unto David." So also Ps. 95:11, 132:2, 3; Isa. 14:24. And this kind of expression is retained by our apostle, Heb. 3:11, "To whom I sware in my wrath, Εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου,—"If they shall enter into my rest." As also it is made use of by our Saviour, Mark 8:12, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, Εἰ δοθήσεται τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ σημεῖον,—"Verily I say unto you, If a sign shall be given unto this generation." There is herein a rhetorical ἀποσιώπησις, where something, for honour or reverence' sake, is restrained, silenced, and not uttered; as, 'If it be so, then let me not be trusted, believed, or obeyed.'

[2.] For the nature of this oath of God, it consists in an express engagement of those holy properties whereby he is known to be God unto the accomplishment of what he promiseth or threateneth. By his being, his life, his holiness, his power, is he known to be God; and therefore by them is he said to swear, when they are all engaged unto the fulfilling of his word.

Fourthly, There is a reason added why God thus sware by himself. It was "because he had none greater whereby he might swear." And this reason is built upon this maxim, that the nature of an oath consisteth in the invocation of a superior in whose power we are. For two things we design in that invocation of another: 1. A testimony to be given unto the truth we assert; 2. Vengeance or punishment of the contrary upon us. Wherefore we do ascribe two things unto him whom we invocate in an oath: 1. An absolute omnisciency, or infallible knowledge of the truth or falsehood of what we assert; 2. A sovereign power

over us, whence we expect protection in case of right and truth, or punishment in case we deal falsely and treacherously. And this respect unto punishment is that alone which gives force and efficacy unto oaths among mankind. There is a principle ingrafted in the minds of men by nature, that God is the supreme rector, ruler, and judge of all men and their actions; as also, that the holiness of his nature, with his righteousness as a ruler and judge, doth require that evil and sin be punished in them who are under his government. Of his omnipotent power, also, to punish all sorts of transgressors, the highest, greatest, and most exempt from human cognizance, there is an alike conception and presumption. According as the minds of men are actually influenced by these principles, so are their oaths valid and useful, and no otherwise. And therefore it hath been provided, that men of profligate lives, who manifest that they have no regard unto God nor his government of the world, should not be admitted to give testimony by oath. And if, instead of driving all sorts of persons, the worst, the vilest of men, on slight, or light, or no occasions, unto swearing, none might be in any case admitted thereunto but such as evidence in their conversations such a regard unto the divine rule and government of the world as is required to give the least credibility unto an oath, it would be much better with human society. And that inroad which atheism hath made on the world in these latter ages, hath weakened and brought in a laxation of all the nerves and bonds of human society. These things belong unto the nature of an oath amongst men, and without them it is nothing. But wherefore, then, is God said to swear, who, as the apostle speaks, can have no greater to swear by, no superior unto whom in swearing he should have respect? It is because, as to infinite omniscience, power, and righteousness,—the things respected in an oath,—God is that essentially in and unto himself which he is in a way of external government unto his creatures. Wherefore, when he will condescend to give us the utmost security and assurance of any thing which our nature is capable of antecedent unto actual enjoyment, in and by the express engagement of his holiness, veracity, and immutability, he is said to swear, or to confirm his word with his oath.

The end and use of this oath of God is so fully expressed, verse 17, that I must thither refer the consideration of it.

Fifthly, The event of this promise-giving and oath of God, on the part of Abraham, is declared, verse 15, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

Καὶ οὕτω. Καὶ οὕτω, "and so;"—'This was the way and manner of God's dealing with him; and this was the way, on the other side, how he carried it towards God.' Μακροθυμήσας. And the manner of his deportment, or the way whereby he attained the end proposed, was μακροθυμήσας,—"he patiently endured;" "after he had patiently endured," or rather, "patiently enduring." The word hath been spoken unto before. Μακρόθυμος, אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, "longanimus," "lentus," "tardus ad iram;"—one that is not quickly provoked, not easily excited unto anger, hasty resolutions, or any distempered passion of mind. And sundry things are intimated in this word:—

1. That Abraham was exposed to trials and temptations about the truth and accomplishment of this promise. If there be not difficulties, provocations, and delays in a business, it cannot be known whether a man be μακρόθυμος or no, he hath no occasion to exercise this longanimity.

2. That he was not discomposed or exasperated by them, so as to wax weary, or to fall off from a dependence on God. The apostle explains fully the meaning of this word, Rom. 4:18–21: "Against hope he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Continuing in a way of believing, as trusting to the veracity and power of God against all difficulties and oppositions, was his μακροθυμία, or "patient endurance."

3. That he abode a long season in this state and condition, waiting on God and trusting unto his power. It is not a thing quickly tried, whether a man be μακρόθυμος, one that will "patiently endure," or no. It is not from his deportment under one or two trials that a man can be so denominated. The whole space of time from his first call to the day of his death, which was just a hundred years, is here included. Wherefore this word expresseth the life and spirit of that faith of Abraham which is here proposed to the Hebrews as their example.

Ἐπέτυχε τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. The end of the whole was, that ἐπέτυχε τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, "compos factus est promissionis," "obtinuit promissionem;" "he obtained" or "enjoyed the promise." Sundry expositors refer this obtaining of the promise to the birth of Isaac, a son by Sarah, which he so long waited for, and at

length enjoyed; for this was the principal hinge whereon all other privileges of the promise did depend. But Isaac was upwards of twenty years old at that time, when the promise which the apostle had respect unto was confirmed by the oath of God. It cannot therefore be that his birth should be the thing promised. Besides, he twice informs us, chap. 11:13, 39, that the ancient patriarchs, among whom he reckoneth Abraham as one, "received not the promises." That which he there intends is their full accomplishment, in the actual exhibition of the promised Seed. It is not, therefore, a full, actual enjoyment of the thing promised that is here intended; as it would be, if it respected only the birth of Isaac. Wherefore Abraham's obtaining the promise, was no more but his enjoyment of the mercy, benefit, and privilege of it, in every state and condition, whereof in that state and condition he was capable.

If, therefore, we take a view of the promise as it was before explained, we shall see evidently how Abraham obtained it; that is, how it was every way made good unto him, according as the nature of the thing itself would bear. For as unto his own personal blessing, whether in things typical or spiritual, he obtained or enjoyed it. As things were disposed in the type, he was blessed and multiplied, in that increase of goods and children which God gave unto him. Spiritually, he was justified in his own person, and therein actually enjoyed all the mercy and grace which by the promised Seed, when actually exhibited, we can be made partakers of. He who is freely justified in Christ, and therewithal made partaker of adoption and sanctification, may well be said to have obtained the promise. And hereon dependeth eternal glory also, which our apostle testifieth that Abraham obtained. For that part of the promise, that he should be the "heir of the world, and the father of all that believe," it could not be actually accomplished in his own days; wherefore therein he obtained the promise, in the assurance he had of it, with the comfort and honour which depended thereon. As a pledge of all these things, he saw the posterity of Isaac, in whom they were all to be fulfilled. Some things, therefore, there were in the promises which could not be actually accomplished in his days; such were the birth of the blessing Seed, the numerousness and prosperity of his children according to the flesh, the coming in of a multitude of nations to be his children by faith. These things he obtained, in that assurance and comfortable prospect which he had of them through believing. They were infallibly and unchangeably made sure unto him, and had their accomplishment in their proper season, Isa. 60:22. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. V. Whatever difficulty and opposition may lie in the way, patient endurance in faith and obedience will infallibly bring us unto the full enjoyment of the promises.

Obs. VI. Faith gives such an interest unto believers in all the promises of God, as that they obtain even those promises,—that is, the benefit and comfort of them,—whose actual accomplishment in this world they do not behold.

Ver. 16.—"For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."

Sixthly, The apostle in these words confirms one part of his intention, the stability of a divine promise confirmed with an oath, by a general maxim concerning the nature and use of an oath among men; and withal makes a transition into the second part of his discourse, or the application of the whole unto the use of them that believe. And therefore sundry things, an observation whereof will give us the sense and explication of them, are to be considered; as,

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Μὲν γάρ. 1. The reason why God, in his gracious condescension unto our infirmities, is pleased to confirm his promise with an oath, is introduced by the particle γάρ, "for;" which gives an account of what was spoken, verse 13. And the reason intended consists herein, that by the light of nature, witnessed unto by the common consent and usage of mankind, the ultimate, supreme, and most satisfactory way of giving assurance unto, or confirming what is spoken or promised, is by an oath. And the apostle argueth not merely from what men do by common consent as it were among themselves, but from what the law and order of all things, in subjection unto God, doth require. For whereas men do or ought to acknowledge his supreme rule and government over all, when their own rights and concerns cannot be determined and peaceably fixed by reason, or testimony, or any other instrument whereof they have the use, it is necessary that an appeal be made unto God for his interposition; wherein all must acquiesce. This, therefore, being amongst men the highest assurance and ultimate determination of their thoughts, the holy God, intending the like assurance in spiritual things, confirms his promise by his oath, that we may know, from what we centre in as to our own occasions, that there can be no accession of security made thereunto.

Κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὀμνύουσε. 2. There is in the words the internal manner and form of swearing amongst men; "they swear by a greater,"—a nature above them, superior unto them, in whose power and at whose disposal they are; which hath been spoken unto.

Ἀντιλογίας πέρας. 3. The use of an oath among men is declared; and therein the subject-matter of it, or what is the occasion and subject which it respects. And this is ἀντιλογία; which we have rendered "strife," "contradiction" between two or more. When one party avers one thing, and another another, and no evidence ariseth from the matter controverted about, nor any of its circumstances, there must of necessity be amongst them ἀντιλογία ἀπείρατος, an "endless strife," and mutual contradiction; which would quickly bring all things to violence and confusion. For if, in matters of great concernment and especial interest, one man positively asserts one thing, and another another, and no evidence arise from circumstances to state aright the matter in difference, it must come to force and war, if there be no other way of bringing all parties unto an acquiescency: for he who hath peremptorily asserted his right, will not afterwards voluntarily forego it; not only because of the loss of his just claim, as he apprehends, but also of his reputation, in making an unjust claim thereunto. In such cases an oath is necessary unto the government and peace of mankind, as without which strifes must be perpetuated, or ended by force and violence. This the apostle respects when he saith, "An oath amongst men is an end of strife." There is therefore required, unto a lawful oath, (1.) A just occasion, or a strife amongst men otherwise undeterminable. (2.) A lawful rule, or government with power to propose and to judge about the difference on the evidence thereof; or a mutual consent of persons concerned. (3.) A solemn invocation of God, as the supreme governor of the world, for the interposition of his omniscience and power, to supply the defects and weaknesses that are in the rules and rulers of human society.

Πέρας ἀντιλογίας. 4. This brings in the end of an oath among men; and that is, to be πέρας ἀντιλογίας,—that is, to put bounds and limits to the contentions and mutual contradictions of men about right and truth not otherwise determinable, to make an end of their strife.

Εἰς βεβαίωσιν. 5. The way whereby this is done, is by interposing the oath εἰς βεβαίωσιν, for the "avowing of the truth," rendering it firm and stable in the minds of men which did before fluctuate about it.

If this be the nature, use, and end of an oath amongst men; if, under the conduct of natural light, they thus issue all their differences, and acquiesce therein; certainly the oath of God, wherewith his promise is confirmed, must of necessity be the most effectual means to issue all differences between him and believers, and to establish their souls in the faith of his promises, against all oppositions, difficulties, and temptations whatever, as the apostle manifests in the next verses.

As these words are applied unto, or used to illustrate the state of things between God and our souls, we may observe from them,—

Obs. VII. That there is, as we are in a state of nature, a strife and difference between God and us.

Obs. VIII. The promises of God are gracious proposals of the only way and means for the ending of that strife.

Obs. IX. The oath of God, interposed for the confirmation of these promises, is every way sufficient to secure believers against all objections and temptations, in all straits and trials about peace with God through Jesus Christ.

But there is that in the words, absolutely considered, which requires our further inquiry into, and confirmation of the truth therein. There is an assertion in them, that "men use to swear by the greater," and thereby put an end unto strife and contentions between them. But it may yet be inquired, whether this respect matter of fact only, and declare what is the common usage among men; or whether it respect right also, and so expresseth an approbation of what they do; and moreover, whether, upon a supposition of such an approbation, this be to be extended to Christians, so that their swearing in the cases supposed be also approved. This being that which I affirm, with its due limitation, I shall premise some things unto the understanding of it, and then confirm its truth.

An oath in the Hebrew is called שְׁבוּעָה; and there are two things observable about it:—that the verb, "to swear," is never used but in Niphal, a passive conjugation, נִשְׁבַּע. And as some think this doth intimate that we should be passive in swearing,—that is, not do it unless called, at least from circumstances compelled thereunto; so moreover it doth, that he who swears hath taken a burden on himself, or binds himself to the matter of his oath. And it is derived from שֶׁבַע, which signifies "seven;" because, as some think, an oath ought to be before many witnesses. But seven being the sacred, complete, or perfect number, the name of an oath may be derived from it because it is appointed to put a

present end unto differences. The Greek calls it ὅρκος; most probably from εἴργειν, as it signifies "to bind" or "strengthen," for by an oath a man takes a bond on his soul and conscience that cannot be loosed ordinarily. And the Latin words, "juro" and "jusjurandum," are plainly derived from "jus;" that is, "right and law." It is an assertion for the confirmation of that which is right; and therefore loseth its nature, and becometh a mere profanation, when it is used in any other case but the confirmation of what is just and right.

And the nature of an oath consists in a solemn confirmation of what we affirm or deny, by a religious invocation of the name of God, as one that knoweth and owneth the truth which we affirm. As far as God is thus invocated in an oath, it is part of his worship, both as required by him and as ascribing glory to him; for when a man is admitted unto an oath, he is as it were so far discharged from an earthly tribunal, and by common consent betakes himself to God, as the sole judge in the case. By what particular expression this appeal unto God and invocation of him is made, is not absolutely necessary unto the nature of an oath to determine. It sufficeth that such expressions be used as are approved and received signs of such an invocation and appeal among them that are concerned in the oath: only it must be observed, that these signs themselves are natural, and not religious, unless they are approved of God himself. Where any thing pretends to be of that nature, the authority of it is diligently to be examined. And therefore that custom which is in use amongst ourselves, of laying the hand on the Book in swearing, and afterwards kissing of it, if it be any more but an outward sign which custom and common consent have authorized to signify the real taking of an oath, is not to be allowed. But in that sense, though it seems very inconvenient, it may be used until somewhat more proper and suited unto the nature of the duty may be agreed upon; which the Scripture would easily suggest unto any who had a mind to learn.

The necessary qualifications of a lawful and a solemn oath are so expressed by the prophet as nothing needs to be added to them, nothing can be taken from them: Jer. 4:2, "Thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth," (that is, interpose the name of the living God when thou swearest,) "in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness." 1. Truth is required in it, in opposition unto falsehood and guile. Where this is otherwise, God is called to be a witness unto a lie: which is to deny his being; for he whom we serve is the God of truth, yea, truth itself essentially. 2. It must be in judgment also that we swear; not lightly, not rashly, not without a just cause,—that which is so in itself, and which appears unto us so to be; or, by "judgment," the contest itself, unto whose determination an oath is

interposed, may be intended: 'Thou shalt swear in such a case only as wherein something of weight comes to be determined in judgment.' Without this qualification, swearing is accompanied with irreverence and contempt of God, as though his name were to be invocated on every slight and common occasion. 3. In righteousness we must also swear; which respects the matter and end of the oath, namely, that it be right and equity which we intend to confirm; or else we avouch God as giving countenance unto our wickedness and injustice.

These things being premised, I do affirm, that where matters are in strife or controversy among men, the peace and tranquillity of human society, in general or particular, depending on the right determination of them, it is lawful for a Christian, or a believer, being lawfully called, to confirm the truth which he knows by the interposition or invocation of the name of God in an oath, with this design, to put an end unto strife. For our apostle in this place doth not only urge the common usage of mankind, but he layeth down a certain maxim and principle of the law of nature, whose exercise was to be approved amongst all. And if the practice hereof had not been lawful unto them unto whom he wrote,—that is, Christians who obeyed the gospel,—he had exceedingly weakened all that he had designed from his discourse concerning the oath of God, by shutting it up with this instance, which could be of no force unto them, because in that which was unlawful for them to practise, or to have an experience of its efficacy. Wherefore I shall manifest these two things: 1. That a solemn oath is a part of the natural worship of God, which the light of nature leads unto; and is not only lawful, but in some cases a necessary duty unto Christians, and positively approved by God in his word. 2. That there is nothing in the Gospel that doth contradict or control this light of nature and divine institution, but there is that whereby they are confirmed:—

1. For the first, we have, (1.) The example of God himself, who, as we have seen, is said sundry times to swear, and whose oath is of signal use unto our faith and obedience. Now, if men had not had a sense and understanding of the nature, lawfulness, and obligation from the light of nature, of an oath, this would have been of no use nor signification unto them. It is true, that God did expressly institute the rite and use of swearing in judgment among his people at the giving of the law, and gave directions about the causes, manner, and form of an oath, Deut. 6:13, 10:20; Exod. 22:8–11; from thence the use of an oath, and consequentially of the oath of God, might be known. But the most solemn swearing of God was before the law, as in that instance which our apostle insists

upon of his oath unto Abraham. The nature and force hereof could no otherwise be discovered but by the light of nature, wherein God further enlightened and instructed men by his own example.

(2.) In compliance herewith, holy men, and such as walked with God before the giving of the law, did solemnly swear when occasion did require it, and they were lawfully called. So Abraham sware to Abimelech, Gen. 21:22–24; and gave an oath unto his servant, Gen. 24:3, 9. So Jacob sware with Laban, Gen. 31:53. And Joseph sware unto his father, Gen. 47:31. And these had no respect unto any legal institution, so that their practice should be thought to be reproved in those passages of the Gospel which shall be mentioned afterwards.

(3.) That oaths were in use and approved under the law and administration thereof, is not to be denied; and they are commended who did solemnly practise according to the command, Isa. 65:16, Ps. 63:11: which of itself doth sufficiently evidence that there is no evil in the nature of it; for God did never permit, much less approve, any thing of that kind. And those who judge an oath to be unlawful under the new testament, do suppose that the Lord Christ hath taken away the principal instrument of human society, the great means of preserving peace, tranquillity and right, though in its own nature good and every way suited to the nature of God and man.

2. There is in the New Testament nothing against this practice, yea, there is much to confirm it; although, considering the foundations whereon it is built, it is sufficient that there is not any thing in the Gospel contrary unto it as it was a positive institution, nor can there be any thing in the Gospel contrary unto it as it is a dictate of the light of nature. But,—

(1.) That prophecy, Isa. 45:23, doth belong and is expressly applied unto believers under the new testament: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." See Rom. 14:11. This hath respect unto what God had of old prescribed, Deut. 6:13, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." 'This now,' saith the prophet, 'shall in the days of the gospel be observed throughout the world;' which it could not be in case it were not lawful for Christians in any case to swear by that holy name. And that, in like manner, is a promise concerning the calling and conversion of the Gentiles under the new testament, Jer. 12:16: "And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth, (as they caused my people to swear by Baal;) then shall

they be built in the midst of my people." Now this can be no direction, no encouragement unto the converts of the Gentiles, if it be not lawful for them so to swear, if it be not their duty when lawfully called thereunto. Yea, if God promiseth that they shall swear by his name, and the gospel should forbid them so to do, where should they find rest and assurance unto their obedience?

(2.) The apostle Paul doth solemnly swear unto the truth of his own affirmations concerning himself, and his sincerity in them, Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23. It was not concerning any doctrines he taught that he did swear. They needed no confirmation by his oath, as deriving all their authority and assurance from divine revelation. But it was concerning his own heart and purpose, whereof there might be much doubt and hesitation, yea, presumption contrary to the truth; when yet it was of great concernment to the church to have them truly known and stated. And in this case he confirms his assertion by an oath; which wholly takes off all pretence of a general rule that an oath is unlawful under the new testament, with those who will not make the apostle a transgressor.

(3.) Had an oath been unlawful under the new testament, God would not have continued the use of it in any kind, lest Christians should thereby be drawn to act against the rule and his command. But this he did in that of the angel who "lifted up his hand unto heaven, and sware by him who liveth for ever and ever," Rev. 10:5, 6. To give a great and an approved example of that which in no case we may imitate, doth not become the wisdom of God, and his care towards his church.

Add unto all these considerations the express approbation given in this place by our apostle unto the practice of solemn swearing among men, to confirm the truth and to put an end unto strife, and the lawfulness of an oath will be found sufficiently confirmed in the New Testament as well as the Old.

There are two places in the New Testament which are usually pleaded in opposition unto this liberty and duty. The first is in the words of our Saviour, Matt. 5:33–37, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." And unto these words of our Saviour the apostle James hath respect, chap. 5:12, "But above all things, my

brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

Ans. It is evident that this place of James is derived from, and hath respect unto the words of our Saviour; it being an express inculcation of his precept and direction, on the same reason. The same answer, therefore, will serve both places; which will not be difficult, from the observation of the reasons and circumstances of our Saviour's discourse. And to this end we may observe,—

[1.] That all things prohibited by our Saviour, in that sermon to the Jews, were in themselves, and by virtue of the law of God, antecedently unlawful. Only, whereas the Pharisees, by their traditions and false interpretations of the Scripture, in a compliance with their own wickedness and covetousness, had persuaded the body of the church, and brought them into the practice of much lewdness and many sins; and by their ignorance of the true spiritual nature of the law, had led men unto an indulgence unto their internal lusts and corruptions, so they brake not forth into open practice; our Saviour rends the veil of their hypocrisy, discovers the corruption of their traditions and interpretations of the law, declares the true nature of sin, and in sundry instances shows how and wherein, by these false glosses, the body of the people had been drawn into soul-ruining sins: whereby he "restored the law," as the Jews speak, "unto its pristine crown." Let any one of the particulars mentioned by our Saviour be considered, and it will be found that it was before unlawful in itself, or declared so in the positive law of God. Was it not evil, to be "angry with a brother without a cause," and to call him "raca," and "fool?" verse 22. Was it not so, to "look on a woman to lust after her?" or were such unclean desires ever innocent? That, therefore, which is here prohibited by our Saviour, "Swear not at all," was somewhat that was even then unlawful, but practised on the false glosses of the Pharisees upon the law. Now this was not solemn swearing, in judgment and righteousness, which we have proved before not only to have been lawful, but appointed expressly by God himself.

[2.] Our Saviour expressly limiteth his precept unto our communication, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay," verse 37. There was then amongst men, and that countenanced by the Pharisees, a cursed way of mixing oaths with men's ordinary communication. This blasphemous wickedness, as it was a direct violation of the third commandment, so it was frequently rebuked by the prophets. But, as other public sins, it grew and increased among the people, until their corrupt leaders, in compliance with them, began to distinguish what oaths

in common communication were lawful and what were unlawful, what were obligatory and what were not. To eradicate this cursed practice, our Saviour gives this general prohibition unto all that would be his disciples, "Swear not at all,"—that is, in communication; which is the first design of the third commandment. And as there is nothing which more openly proclaims a contempt of Christ and his authority, among many who would be esteemed Christians, than their ordinary, customary swearing and cursing by the name of God, and other hellish imprecations which they have invented, in their daily communication; so possibly the observation of the greatness of that evil, its extent and incurableness, hath cast some on the other extreme. But it is no property of a wise man, by avoiding one extreme, to run into another.

[3.] The direction and precept of our Saviour is given in direct opposition unto the corrupt glosses and interpretations of the law, introduced by tradition, and made authentic by the authority of the Pharisees. This is evident from the express antithesis in the words, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time: ... but I say unto you." Now these were two. 1st. That there was no evil in an oath at any time, but only in swearing falsely. This they gathered (as they fathered their most absurd apprehensions on some pretext of Scripture) from Lev. 19:12, "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God." From hence they concluded that God's name was not profaned in swearing, unless a man sware falsely; that is, forsware himself. And this also they restrained principally unto promises by oaths, or vows to be performed unto God; which turned to their advantage, who had the disposal of things sacred and devoted. This they judged to comprise the whole of the prohibition in the third commandment: but most falsely, and unto the hazard of the souls of men; for not only the using or interposition of the name of God in a false matter, which is perjury, but also the using of it "in vain,"—that is, without just cause, or reason, or call, lightly and vainly,—is expressly forbidden. Herein our Saviour interposeth his divine interpretation, and, in opposition unto the corrupt exposition of the Pharisees, declares that not only false swearing by the name of God, in judgment or otherwise, is forbidden in the command, but also that vain interposition of the name of God in our "communication" is utterly prohibited. And it is hence evident unto me, that no man ought voluntarily to take an oath, unless the matter in controversy be undeterminable without it, and the authority be lawful that requires it. 2dly. Aiming to comply with the lusts and corruptions of men (as the great artifice of all false teachers consists in the accommodation of doctrines to the blindness

and prevalent sins of men), they had found out a way how they might swear, and swear on, without the guilt of perjury, did they swear never so falsely. And this was, not to swear by the name of God himself,—which if they did, and sware falsely, they were perjured,—but by the heavens, or by the earth, or Jerusalem, or the temple, or the altar, or their own heads; for such kind of oaths and execrations were then, as also now, in use in the ordinary communication of men. But herein also the filthy hypocrites had a farther reach, and had insinuated another pestilent opinion into the minds of men, tending to their own advantage. For they had instructed them, that they might freely swear by the temple, but not by the gold of it; and by the altar, but not by the gift that was upon it, Matt. 23:16–19. For from the gold offered in the temple, and the gift brought unto the altar, did advantage arise unto these covetous hypocrites; who would therefore beget a greater veneration in the minds of men towards them than to the express institutions of God themselves. In opposition unto this corruption, our Saviour declares that in all these things there is a tacit respect unto God himself; and that his name is no less profaned in them than if it were expressly made use of. These are the things alone which our Saviour intendeth in this prohibition; namely, the interposition of the name of God in our ordinary communication, without cause, call, warrant, or authority, when no necessity requireth us thereunto,—where there is no strife otherwise not to be determined, or which by consent is to be so ended; and the usage of the names of creatures, sacred or common, in our oaths, without mentioning of the name of God. And there are two rules, in the interpretation of the Scripture, which we must in such cases always carry along with us: [1.] 'That universal affirmations and negations are not always to be universally understood, but are to be limited by their occasions, circumstances, and subject-matter treated of.' So, where our apostle affirms that he "became all things unto all men," if you restrain not the assertion unto things indifferent, false conclusions may be drawn from it, and of evil consequence. So is the prohibition of our Saviour here to be limited unto rash and temerarious swearing, or it would be contrary to the light of nature, the appointment of God, and the good of human society. [2.] It is a rule also of use in the interpretation of the Scripture, 'That where any thing is prohibited in one place, and allowed in another, that not the thing itself absolutely considered is spoken unto, but the different modes, causes, ends, and reasons of it, are intended.' So here, in one place swearing is forbidden, in others it is allowed, and examples thereof are proposed unto us: wherefore it cannot be swearing absolutely, that is intended in either place; but rash, causeless swearing

is condemned in one, and swearing in weighty causes, for just ends, with the properties of an oath before insisted on, is recommended and approved in the other. I shall shut up the discourse with three corollaries from it:—

Obs. X. That the custom of using oaths, swearing, cursing, or imprecation, in common communication, is not only an open transgression of the third commandment, which God hath threatened to revenge, but it is a practical renunciation also of all the authority of Jesus Christ, who hath so expressly interdicted it.

Obs. XI. Whereas swearing by the name of God, in truth, righteousness, and judgment, is an ordinance of God for the end of strife amongst men; perjury is justly reckoned among the worst and highest of sins, and is that which reflects the greatest dishonour on God, and tendeth to the ruin of human society.

Obs. XII. Readiness in some to swear on slight occasions, and the ordinary impositions of oaths on all sorts of persons, without a due consideration on either hand of the nature, ends, and properties of lawful swearing, are evils greatly to be lamented, and in God's good time among Christians will be reformed.

Hebrews 6: 17–20

In this last part of the chapter two things are further designed by the apostle: 1. An explication of the purpose and end of God in his promise, as it was confirmed by his oath; and therewithal and from thence he makes application of the whole unto all believers, seeing the mind and will of God was the same towards them all as they were towards Abraham, to whom the promise so confirmed was made in particular. 2. A confirmation of the whole privilege intended, by the introduction of the interposition of Christ in this matter; and this is expressed in a transition and return unto his former discourse concerning the priesthood of Christ.

Ver. 17–20.—Ἐν ᾧ περισσότερον βουλόμενος ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιδεῖξαι τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ, ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ, ἵνα διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι Θεὸν, ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος ἣν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν, καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος, ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδὲκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

Εν ᾧ, "in quo," "qua in re." Syr., מֶטוּל הָנָא, "propter hoc," "qua propter." Some have respect unto the thing itself spoken of, some unto the reasons of things spoken.

Περισσότερον βουλόμενος, "abundantius volens," "volens ex abundanti." Syr., יַתִּירָאִית צָבָא "maxime voluit," "abunde voluit;" "would abundantly."

Ἐπιδεῖξαι. Manuscript [A] ἐπιδείξασθαι, "ostendere;" "manifestly to set forth."

Τὸ ἀμεταθετον τῆς βουλῆς. "Immutabilitatem consilii," Bez. "Immobilitatem," An., Vulg. Lat., Rhem.; "the stability;" which answers neither of the words used, which are more emphatical. Syr., דְּשַׁרְוִדְיֵהּ לָא מֶשְׁתַּחֲלַף, "that his promise should not be changed." Ἀμεταθετον is that which cannot be altered nor transposed into any other state.

Ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκω. "Intervenit juramento," An. "Fidejussit jurejurando," Bez. "Interpositionem fecit jurejurando," "interposuit jusjurandum," Vulg. Lat. Rhem., "he interposed an oath." Not properly, for ἐμεσίτευσεν is, "he himself came between, or in the midst; he interposed himself, and gave his oath." From μέσος is μεσίτης, "interventor," "fidejussor," "interpres," εἰρηνοποίος, "pacificator." Thence is μεσιτεύω, "mediatorem ago," "pacificatoris partes ago;" "to interpose a man's self by any means to confirm and establish peace;" which was here done ὅρκω, with "an oath." The word is used in this place only in the New Testament, as μεσίτης is nowhere used but by Paul, Gal. 3:19, 20; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24.

Διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, "ut per duas res immutabiles," or "immobiles." Rhem., "that by two things unmovable." Syr., "which are not changed," or ought not to be. "By two immutable things." Ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν, "fortem consolationem habeamus," "fortissimum solatium," "validam consolationem habeamus," "haberemus." בִּדְיָאֲא רַבָּא יְהֵוֵא לָךְ, Syr., "that great consolation should be to us." Ἰσχυράν denotes such a power and strength in that which is denominated by it as is prevalent against oppositions and difficulties; which is most proper in this place.

Οἱ καταφυγόντες, "confugientes," "qui confugimus." "Qui cursum eo corripimus," Bez.; "who have hastened our course" or "flight." "Qui hue confugimus." Ours, "who have fled for refuge." And indeed καταφεύγω with ἐπί, εἰς, or πρός, is not used but for "to flee to a shelter, refuge, or protection." Hence καταφυγή is "refugium," a refuge that any one betakes himself unto in time of danger.

Κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος, "ad tenendum propositam spem;" "to hold the proposed hope." "Obtinere," to obtain. Syr., וְנֵאחוּד, "that we may hold." "Ut spem propositam retineamus," Bez. "Ad obtinendam spem propositam." Ours, most properly, "to lay hold upon;" for κρατῆσαι is, "injecta manu fortiter tenere" or "retinere."

Ἣν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν, "safe and firm," "firm and stable." Syr., דִּלְבֵיהּ בָּנְפְשָׁךְ דְּלָא תְּתְזְיעִי, "which holds our soul, that it be not moved;" expressing the effect, and not the nature or adjuncts of the means spoken of.

Εἰσεοχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος, "et incedentem," "ingredientem," "introcuntem usque ad interiora velaminis." Vulg., "ad interius velaminis." "Usque in ea quæ sunt intra velum," Bez. Some respect the place only, some the things within the place. "Which entereth into that within the veil." Syr., וְעָאֵל לְגַי מֵן אַפֵּי תֵיעָא, "and entereth into the faces of the gate;" so that interpreter always calleth the veil, "the faces of the gate," port, or entrance of the temple, namely, the most holy place, because it was as a face or frontispiece unto them that were to enter. See Matt. 27:51.

Οπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν. "Ubi præcursor pro nobis introivit." But "quo" is better; not "where," but "whither." Rhem., "the precursor for us." Syr., כַּי דְקִדַם עַל הַלְפַין, "where before Jesus is entered for us;" which determines the ambiguity of ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, not "our forerunner is entered," but "the forerunner is entered for us."

Ver. 17–20.—Wherein God, willing more abundantly to manifest unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed himself by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to deceive, we might have strong [prevailing] consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, both safe and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Sundry things are observable in these words. 1. The introduction unto the application of the foregoing discourse to the use of all believers. Wherein [we have], 2. The design of God in the confirmation of his promise by his oath; which was to "manifest the immutability of his counsel." And this is amplified, (1.) By the frame, purpose, or mind of God therein; he was "willing." (2.) By the manner how he would declare his mind herein; "more abundantly,"—namely,

than could be done by a single promise. It gave not a further stability unto his word, but manifested his willingness to have it believed. 3. The persons are described unto whom God was thus willing to show the immutability of his counsel; who are "the heirs of promise,"—that is, all and only those who are so. 4. The way is expressed whereby God would thus manifest the immutability of his counsel; namely, "by two immutable things,"—that is, his promise and his oath: which, 5. Are proved to be sufficient evidences thereof, from the nature of him by whom they are made and given; it was "impossible that God should lie." 6. The especial end of this whole design of God, with respect unto all the heirs of promise, is said to be that "they might have strong consolation." 7. And thereon they are further described by the way and means they use to obtain the promise and the consolation designed unto them therein; they "flee for refuge to the hope set before them." 8. The efficacy whereof is declared from the nature of it, in comparison unto an anchor; "which we have as an anchor:" further amplified, (1.) From its properties,—it is "sure," or "safe and steadfast;" and also, (2.) From its use,—"it enters into that within the veil." 9. And this use is so expressed that occasion may be thence taken to return unto that from which he had digressed chap. 5:11, namely, the priesthood of Christ. And, 10. The mention thereof he so introduceth, according to his usual manner, as also to manifest the great benefit and advantage of our entering by hope into that within the veil; namely, (1.) Because Christ is there; (2.) Because he is entered thither as "our forerunner;" (3.) From the office wherewith he is there vested, "made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," as he had declared, chap. 5:10: all which must be opened as they occur in the text.

Ἐν ᾧ. 1. Ἐν ᾧ,—that is, say many, ἐφῳ ᾧ, "for which cause." Respect may be had unto the words immediately foregoing, "An oath" among men "is to them an end of all strife:" so a reason is thence inferred why God should interpose himself by an oath in this matter. And the words are rendered by some, as we have seen, "propter quod," or "propterea;" "in" for "propter" is not unusual. And this then is the coherence, 'Whereas mankind doth consent herein, that an oath, in things capable of no other proof or demonstration, shall end controversies, satisfy doubts, and put an issue to contradictions, differences, and strife; God took the same way, in an infinite gracious condescension, to give full satisfaction in this matter unto the "heirs of promise." For what could they require further? Will they not rest in the oath of God, who in doubtful cases do and will acquiesce in the oaths of men? What way could be more suited unto their peace and consolation? And such is God's love and grace, that he would

omit nothing that might tend thereunto, though in such a way of condescension as no creature would, or could, or ought to have expected, before infinite wisdom and mercy had declared themselves therein.' Or, this expression may respect the whole subject-matter treated of; and so the words are rendered "in quo," or "in qua re;" "in which case or matter." And this our translation seems to respect, rendering it "wherein." Then the words direct unto the introduction of the end of God's oath, expressed in the words following, 'In this matter God sware by himself, that thereby the "heirs of promise," might not only be settled in faith, but moreover receive therewithal strong consolation.' And this import of the words we shall adhere unto.

Θεὸς βουλόμενος. Θεὸς βουλόμενος, "God willing." Hereinto all that follows is resolved; it is all founded in the will of God. And two things may be denoted hereby: (1.) The inclination and disposition of the mind of God; he was free, he was not averse from it. This is that which is generally intended, when we say we are willing unto any thing that is proposed unto us; that is, we are free, and not averse unto it. So may God be said to be willing, to have an inclination and an affection unto the work, or to be ready for it, as he speaks in another place, "with his whole heart, and with his whole soul," Jer. 32:41. But although there be a truth herein, as to the mind and will of God towards believers and their consolation, yet it is not what is here peculiarly intended. Wherefore, (2.) A determinate act and purpose of the will of God is designed herein. Θεὸς βουλόμενος is "God purposing" or "determining." So is the same act of God expressed by Θέλων ὁ Θεός, Rom. 9:22,—"What if God, willing to shew his wrath;" that is, purposing or determining so to do. And this Θεὸς βουλόμενος, as it respects τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς, is the same with κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος, Eph. 1:11. Wherefore "God willing," is God in sovereign grace, and from especial love, freely "purposing" and "determining" in himself to do the thing expressed, unto the relief and comfort of believers.

The sovereign will of God is the sole spring and cause of all the grace, mercy, and consolation, that believers are made partakers of in this world. So is it here proposed; thereinto alone is all grace and consolation resolved. God wills it should be so. Man being fallen off from the grace and love of God, and being every way come short of his glory, had no way left, in nor by himself, to obtain any grace, any relief, any mercy, any consolation. Neither was there any the least obligation on God, in point of justice, promise, or covenant, to give any grace unto, to bestow any mercy or favour upon, apostatized sinners; wherefore these things could have no rise, spring, or cause, but in a free, gracious act of the

sovereign will and pleasure of God. And thereunto in the Scripture are they constantly assigned. Whether absolutely, that grace is bestowed on any, or comparatively, on one and not another, it is all from the will of God. "For herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 4:10. Christ himself, with all the grace and mercy we have by him, is from the free love and will of God. So is our election, Eph. 1:4, 5; our vocation, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27; our regeneration, John 1:13, James 1:18; our recovery from sin, Hos. 14:4; so is our peace and all our consolation; whence he is called "the God of all grace," 1 Pet. 5:10; and "the God of patience and consolation," Rom. 15:5;—the author and sovereign disposer of them all.

So is it also with respect unto grace and mercy considered comparatively, as collated on one and not on another, Rom. 9:15, 16; 1 Cor. 4:7. There is no other spring or fountain of any grace or mercy. It may be some may hope to educe grace out of their own wills and endeavours, and to obtain mercy by their own duties and obedience; but the Scripture knows no such thing, nor do believers find it in their experience.

Let them who have received the least of grace and mercy know from whence they have received it, and whereunto they are beholding for it. A due consideration of this sovereign spring of all grace and consolation will greatly influence our minds in and unto all the principal duties of obedience: such as thankfulness to God, Eph. 1:3–5; humility in ourselves, 1 Cor. 4:7; compassion towards others, 2 Tim. 2:25, 26.

Let those who stand in need of grace and mercy (as who doth not?) expect them wholly from the sovereign will and pleasure of God, James 1:5; who is "gracious unto whom he will be gracious." Our own endeavours are means in this kind for obtaining grace in the measures and degrees of it; but it is the will of God alone that is the cause of it all, 2 Tim. 1:9.

2. What God was thus willing unto is expressed; and that was "more abundantly to declare the immutability of his counsel." And we may inquire concerning it, (1.) What is meant by the "counsel" of God; (2.) How that counsel of God was and is "immutable;" (3.) How it was "declared" so to be; (4.) How it was "abundantly" so declared:—

Τὸ ἀμεταθετοι τῆς βουλῆς. (1.) The "counsel" of God is the eternal purpose of his will, called his counsel because of the infinite wisdom wherewith it is always accompanied. So that which is called the "good pleasure which he hath purposed

in himself," Eph. 1:9, is termed "the counsel of his own will," verse 11. Counsel among men, is a rational deliberation about causes, means, effects, and ends, according to the nature of things advised about, and the proper interests of them who do deliberate. In this sense counsel is not to be attributed unto God. For as the infinite, sovereign wisdom of his being admits not of his taking counsel with any other; so the infinite simplicity of his nature and understanding, comprehending all things in one single act of his mind, allows not of formal counsel or deliberation. The first, therefore, of these the Scripture explodes, Isa. 40:13, Rom. 11:34; and although in the latter way God be frequently introduced as one deliberating, or taking counsel with himself, it is not the manner of doing, but the effect, or the thing done, which is intended. So it is in like manner where God is said to hearken, to hear, to see; whereby his infinite knowledge and understanding of all things are intended, these being the mediums whereby we who are to be instructed do come to know and understand what so we do. Whereas, therefore, the end of counsel, or all rational deliberation, is to find out the true and stable directions of wisdom, the acts of the will of God being accompanied with infinite wisdom are called his counsel. For we are not to look upon the purposes and decrees of God as mere acts of will and pleasure, but as those which are effects of infinite wisdom, and therefore most reasonable, although the reasons of them be sometimes unknown unto us. Hence the apostle issueth his discourse of God's eternal decrees of election and reprobation in an admiration of the infinite wisdom of God whence they proceeded, and wherewith they were accompanied, Rom. 11:33–36.

In particular, the counsel of God in this place, is the holy, wise purpose of his will, to give his Son Jesus Christ to be of the seed of Abraham, for the salvation of all the elect, or heirs of promise; and that in such a way, and accompanied with all such good things, as might secure their faith and consolation. This is the counsel of God, which contained all the grace and mercy of the promise, with the securing them unto believers.

(2.) Of this counsel it is affirmed that it was "immutable," not subject unto change. Τὸ ἀμεταθετον, is "quod μετατίθεσθαι nequit," "that cannot be altered." But the design of God here was, not to make his counsel unchangeable, but to declare it so to be; for all the purposes of God, all the eternal acts of his will, considered in themselves, are immutable. See Isa. 46:10; Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21, 21:30. And their immutability is a necessary consequent of the immutability of the nature of God, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"

James 1:17. "The Strength of Israel is not a man, that he should repent," 1 Sam. 15:29. And in opposition unto all change or mutability, it is said of God, וְאַתָּה הוּא, Ps. 102:27; which the apostle renders by Σὺ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ, "Thou art He,"—always in all respects one and the same. Hence among the Jews הוּא, "He," is a name of God, expressing his immutable self-subsistence. But it will be said, that there are in the Scriptures many declarations of God's altering his purposes and counsels, and repenting him of what he had before determined, being grieved at what he had done, Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 2:30.

It is agreed by all that those expressions of "repenting, "grieving," and the like, are figurative, wherein no such affections are intended as these words signify in created natures, but only an event of things like that which proceedeth from such affections.

And as to the changes themselves expressed, the schoolmen say not amiss, "Vult Deus mutationem, non mutat voluntatem;"—"He willeth a change, he changeth not his will."

But fully to remove these difficulties, the purposes of God and the counsels of his will may be considered either in themselves, or in the declaration that is made concerning their execution. In themselves they are absolutely immutable, no more subject unto change than is the divine nature itself. The declarations which God makes concerning their execution or accomplishment are of two sorts:—

[1.] There are some of them wherein there is necessarily included a respect unto some antecedent moral rule, which puts an express condition into the declarations, although it be not expressed, and is always in like cases to be understood. Thus God commands the prophet to declare, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," Jonah 3:4. Here seems to be an absolute declaration of the purpose of God, without any condition annexed, a positive prediction of what he would do, and should come to pass. Either God must change his purpose, or Nineveh must be overthrown. But whereas this destruction was foretold for sin, and impenitency therein, there was an antecedent moral rule in the case, which gives it as complete a condition as if it had been expressed in words; and that is, that repentance from sin will free from the punishment of sin. So that the prediction had this limitation, by an antecedent rule, "Unless they repent." And God declares that this rule puts a condition into all his threatenings, Jer. 18:7, 8. And this was the course of God's dealing with the house of Eli, 1 Sam. 2:30. God doth neither suspend his purpose

on what men will do, nor take up conditional resolutions with respect thereunto. He doth not purpose one thing, and then change his resolution upon contingent emergencies; for "he is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job 23:13. Nor doth he determine that if men do so on the one hand, that he will do so; and if otherwise, that he will do otherwise. For instance, there was no such decree or purpose of God, as that if Nineveh did repent it should not be destroyed, and if it did not repent it should perish. For he could not so purpose unless he did not foresee what Nineveh would do; which to affirm is to deny his very being and Godhead. But in order to accomplish his purpose that Nineveh should not perish at that time, he threatens it with destruction in a way of prediction; which turned the minds of the inhabitants to attend unto that antecedent moral rule which put a condition into the prediction, whereby they were saved.

[2.] In the declaration of some of God's counsels and purposes, as to the execution and accomplishment, there is no respect unto any such antecedent moral rule as should give them either limitation or condition. God takes the whole in such cases absolutely on himself, both as to the ordering and disposing of all things and means unto the end intended. Such was the counsel of God concerning the sending of his Son to be of the seed of Abraham, and the blessing that should ensue thereon. No alteration could possibly, on any account, be made herein, neither by the sin nor unbelief of them concerned, nor by any thing that might befall them in this world. Such was the counsel of God, and such the immutability of it, here intended: as it was absolutely unchangeable in itself, so, as to man's concern and interest in it, it was attended with no condition or reserve.

Ἐπιδειξαι. (3.) This immutability God was willing ἐπιδειξαι, to "show," "manifest," "declare," "make known." It is not his counsel absolutely, but the immutability of his counsel, that God designed to evidence. His counsel he made known in his promise. All the gracious actings of God towards us are the executing of his holy, immutable purposes, Eph. 1:11. And all the promises of God are the declarations of those purposes. And they also in themselves are immutable; for they depend on the essential truth of God: Tit 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." God's essential veracity is engaged in his promises. And they are so expressly the declaration of his purposes, that when God had only purposed to give us eternal life in Christ, he is said to have promised it; namely, before the world began. And this declareth the nature of unbelief: "He that believeth not God, hath

made him a liar," 1 John 5:10; because his essential truth is engaged in his promise. And to make God a liar, is to deny his being; which every unbeliever doth as he is able. But whereas God intended not only the confirmation of the faith of the heirs of promise, but also their consolation under all their difficulties and temptations, he would give a peculiar evidence of the immutability of that counsel which they embraced by faith as tendered in the promise. For what was done did not satisfy the fulness of grace and love which he would declare in this matter, no, though it were done so "abundantly;" but, —

Περισσότερον. (4.) He would do it περισσότερον, "more abundantly;" that is, beyond what was absolutely necessary in this case. The promise of God, who is the "God of truth," is sufficient to give us security; nor could it be by us discovered how the goodness of God itself should require a further procedure. Yet because something further might be useful, for the reasons and ends before declared, he would add a further confirmation unto his word. And herein as the divine goodness and condescension are evidently manifested, so it likewise appears what weight God lays upon the assuring of our faith and confidence. For in this case he swears by himself, who hath taught us not so to use his name but in things of great consequence and moment. This is the sense of the word if it respect the assurance given, which is "more abundant" than it could be in or by a single promise. But περισσότερον may refer unto God himself, who gives this assurance; and then it is as much as "ex abundanti:"—when God, who is truth itself, might justly have required faith of us on his single promise, yet, "ex abundanti," from a superabounding love and care, he would confirm it by his oath. Either sense suits the apostle's design.

Τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. 3. It is declared who they were to whom God intended to give this evidence of the immutability of his counsel: and that is, τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας,—to "the heirs of promise;" that is, believers, all believers both under the old and new testament. It may be, indeed, that those of the Hebrews were in the first place intended; for unto them did the promise belong in the first place, as they were the natural seed of Abraham, and unto them was it first to be declared and proposed upon its accomplishment, Acts 2:39, 3:25, 26, 13:46. But it is not they alone who are intended. All the children of the faith of Abraham are heirs also, Gal. 4:28, 29. It is therefore with respect unto all believers absolutely that God confirmed his promise with his oath, though the natural seed of Abraham were respected in the first place, until they cut off themselves by their unbelief. See Luke 1:72, 73; Mic. 7:20.

Believers are called "heirs of the promise" on a double account: (1.) With respect unto the promise itself; (2.) With respect unto the matter of the promise, or the thing promised. This distinction is evidently founded on Heb. 11:13, 17, 39, compared. For look in what sense they are said to be "heirs of the promise," therein they are not actually possessed of it; for an heir is only in expectancy of that whereof he is an heir. Wherefore take the promise in the first sense formally, and it is the elect of God as such who are the heirs of it. God hath designed them unto an interest therein and a participation thereof; and he confirmed it with his oath, that they might be induced and encouraged to believe it, to mix it with faith, and so come to inherit it, or to be made actual partakers of it. To this purpose our apostle disputeth at large, Rom. 9:6–12. In the latter sense, taking the promise materially for the thing promised, they are heirs of it who have an actual interest in it by faith; and partaking of the present grace and mercy wherewith it is accompanied, as pledges of future glory, have a right unto the whole inheritance. Thus all believers, and they only, are "heirs of the promise," Rom. 8:17; "heirs of God,"—that is, of the whole inheritance that he hath provided for his children. And I take the words in this latter sense: for it is not the first believing of these heirs of the promise, that they might be justified, which is intended; but their establishment in faith, whereby they may be comforted, or have "strong consolation." But whereas this declaration of the immutability of God's counsel is made in the promise of the gospel, which is universal, or at least indefinitely proposed unto all, how it comes here to be cast under this limitation, that it is made to elect believers, or the heirs of promise only, shall be immediately declared.

Ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ. 4. What God did in this matter, for the ends mentioned, is summarily expressed; ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ,—"he interposed himself by an oath," "fidejussit jurejurando." He that confirmeth any thing by an oath is "fidejussor,"—"one that gives security to faith." And "fidejussor" in the law is interventor,"—"one who interposeth or cometh between, and engageth himself to give security." This state of things is therefore here supposed:—God had given out that promise whose nature we have before declared. Hereon he required the faith of them unto whom it was given, and that justly; for what could any reasonably require further, to give them sufficient ground of assurance? But although all things were clear and satisfactory on the part of God, yet many fears, doubts, and objections, would be ready to arise on the part of believers themselves; as there did in Abraham, unto whom the promise was first made, with respect unto that signal pledge of its accomplishment in the birth of Isaac.

In this case, though God was no way obliged to give them further caution or security, yet, out of his infinite love and condescension, he will give them a higher pledge and evidence of his faithfulness, and interposeth himself by an oath. He mediated by an oath,—he interposed himself between the promise and the faith of believers, to undertake under that solemnity for the accomplishment of it; and swearing, by himself, he takes it on his life, his holiness, his being, his truth, to make it good. The truths which from these words thus opened we are instructed in, are these that follow:—

Obs. I. The purpose of God for the saving of the elect by Jesus Christ is an act of infinite wisdom as well as of sovereign grace.

Hence it is called "the counsel of his will," or an act of his will accompanied with infinite wisdom, which is the counsel of God. And among all the holy properties of his nature, the manifestation of whose glory he designed therein, there is none more expressly and frequently mentioned than his wisdom. And it is declared,—

1. As that which no created understanding, of men or angels, is able perfectly to comprehend, neither in the counsel nor in the effects of it. Hence our apostle shutteth up his contemplation of the ways, paths, and effects of this wisdom, with that rapture of admiration, Rom. 11:33–36, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." The whole issue of our contemplation of the wisdom of God, in the eternal projection of our salvation by Jesus Christ, is only an admiration of that abyss which we cannot dive into, with a humble ascription of glory to God thereon. And as to the especial effects of this wisdom, the angels themselves desire to bow down, with a humble diligence in their inquiry into them, 1 Pet. 1:12. And on these considerations our apostle concludes, that "without controversy" the work hereof is a "great mystery," 1 Tim. 3:16; which we may adore, but cannot comprehend. See the name of Christ, Isa. 9:6.

2. As that wherein God hath expressly designed to glorify himself unto eternity. This is the end of all the free acts and purposes of the will of God; neither can they have any other, though all other things may be subordinate thereunto. Now no property of the divine nature is so conspicuous, in the

disposal of things unto their proper end, as that of wisdom, whose peculiar work and effect it is. Wherefore the great end which God will ultimately effect being his own glory in Christ, and the salvation of the elect by him, the wisdom whereby it was contrived must needs be eminent and glorious. So the apostle tells us, "Then is the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom unto God, even the Father," and he also in his human nature subjects himself unto him, "that God may be all in all," 1 Cor. 15:24, 28:—that is, when the Lord Christ hath finished the whole work of his mediation, and brought all his elect unto the enjoyment of God, then shall "God be all in all;" or therein, or thereby, he will be for ever exalted and glorified, when it shall be manifest how all this great work came forth from him, and is issued in him, Jude 25, 1 Tim. 1:17.

3. The whole work is therefore expressly called "the wisdom of God," because of those characters and impressions thereof that are upon it, and because it is a peculiar effect thereof. So our apostle tells us that Christ crucified "is the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:24; and that the gospel whereby it is declared "is "the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. 2:7: and the whole intended is both expressly and fully laid down, Eph. 3:8–11, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The "purpose" mentioned in the close of these words, is the same with the "counsel" of God's will in this place. And this purpose was the fountain, spring, and cause, of all those glorious and admirable things whose declaration was committed unto the apostle, as the great publisher of the gospel unto the Gentiles; by the effects whereof such mysteries were unfolded as the angels themselves in heaven did not before understand. 'And what was it,' saith the apostle, 'that was declared, manifested, and known thereby? It was πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the manifold wisdom of God," or the infinite wisdom of God, exerting itself in such wonderful variety of holy, wise operations, as no mind of men nor angels can comprehend.' And,—

4. On this account are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge said to be hid in Jesus Christ, Col. 2:3. There is not only in him, and the work of his mediation, "the wisdom of God,"—that is, both exerted and manifested,—but

"all the treasures of it;" that is, God will not produce any effect out of the stores of his infinite wisdom, but what is suitable and subservient unto what he hath designed in and by Jesus Christ. And may we not,—

(1.) Hence see the horrible depravation of nature which by sin is befallen the minds, reasons, and understandings of men? For from hence alone it is that this purpose of God, which was an act of infinite wisdom; that the work which he hath wrought pursuant thereof, whereon are impressed the characters of his manifold wisdom; are esteemed folly, or foolish things unto them. So far are men by nature from seeing an excellency of divine wisdom in them, that they cannot suffer them to pass as things tolerably rational, but brand them as foolish, or folly itself. This our apostle declares and at large insisteth on, 1 Cor. 1. Had the mind of man fixed on any other reason for the rejection of this counsel of God, some excuse might be pretended for it; but to reject that as folly which God sets forth and declares as the principal instance of his infinite wisdom, this discovereth the horror of its depravation. And those in whom this blindness is prevalent may be referred unto three sorts:—

[1.] Such as by whom the gospel is absolutely rejected as a foolish thing, unbecoming the wisdom of God to propose, and their own wisdom to receive. As this was the state of the Jews, and Pagan world of old, and as it is the condition of the Mohammedans and relics of the Heathens at this day, so I wish that the poison and contagion of this wickedness were not farther diffused. But, alas! we see many every day who, on the account of their outward circumstances, live in some kind of compliance with the name and profession of the gospel, who yet discover themselves sufficiently to hate, despise, and contemn the mystery of it, and the wisdom of God therein.

[2.] Such as own the gospel in the letter of it, but look on the mystery of it, or the counsel of God therein, as foolishness. Hence all the principal parts of it, as the incarnation of Christ, the hypostatical union of his person, his sacrifice and oblation, the atonement and satisfaction made by his death, the imputation of his righteousness, the election of grace, with the power and efficacy of it in our conversion, are all of them either directly exploded as foolish, or wrested unto senses suited unto their own low and carnal apprehensions. And this sort of men do swarm amongst us at this day like to locusts when a north-east wind hath filled every place with them.

[3.] There are multitudes, whose choice of their outward conditions being prevented by the providence of God, so that they are brought forth and fixed where the gospel passeth current in the world without any open control, who do see no reason why, with the first sort, they should openly reject it, nor will be at the pains, with the second sort, to corrupt it, but yet practically esteem it a foolish thing to give place unto its power on their hearts, and do really esteem them foolish who labour so to do. And this is openly the condition of the generality of those who live under the dispensation of the gospel in the world.

I have named these things only to reflect thereby on that horrible depravation which, by corruption of nature, is come upon the mind and reason of mankind. And it is in none more evident than in those who most boast of the contrary. And,—

(2.) We may learn from hence, that there is no greater evidence of thriving in spiritual light and understanding, than when we find our souls affected with, and raised unto a holy admiration of the wisdom and counsel of God, which are declared in the gospel.

Obs. II. The life and assurance of our present comfort and future glory depend on the immutability of God's counsel.—To secure these things unto us, God shows us that immutability. Our own endeavours are to be used to the same end; for we are to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." But all depends on the unchangeable purpose of the will of God, which alone is able to bear the charge of so great a work. But this must be further spoken unto on the next verse.

Obs. III. The purpose of God concerning the salvation of the elect by Jesus Christ became immutable from hence, that the determination of his will was accompanied with infinite wisdom. It was his "counsel."

All the certainty that is amongst men, as to the accomplishment of any end designed by them, depends on the exercise of wisdom in finding out and applying suitable means thereunto. And because their wisdom is weak in all things, and in most no better than folly,—whence generally they fix first on ends unprofitable, and then make use of means weak and unsuited unto their purpose,—it is that all their affairs are wrapped up in uncertainties, and most of them end in disappointment and confusion. But as God fixeth on those ends which perfectly comply with his own infinite holiness and sovereignty, whence they are necessarily good and holy; so he doth not first do so, and then make choice of various means that proffer themselves unto those ends. But, in his

infinite wisdom, ends and means lie before him in one vein, and fall together under his unalterable determination. Two things, therefore, may be considered in the wisdom of God giving immutability to his counsel concerning the salvation of the elect by Jesus Christ:—

1. Thereby he saw at once not only whatever was needful for the accomplishing of it, but that which would infallibly effect it. He chose not probable and likely means for it, and such as might do it, unless some great obstruction did arise,—such as whose efficacy might be suspended on any conditions and emergencies; but such as should infallibly and inevitably reach the end intended. In the first covenant, wherein God had not immutably decreed to preserve mankind absolutely in their primitive estate, he made use of such means for their preservation as might effect it in case they were not wanting unto themselves, or that obedience which they were enabled to perform. This man neglecting, the means appointed of God as to their success depending thereon by God's own appointment, that end which in their own nature they tended unto was not attained; and that because God had not immutably determined it. But now, whereas God engaged himself in an unchangeable purpose, in his infinite wisdom he fixeth on such means for its accomplishment as shall not depend on any thing whereby their efficacy might be frustrated. Such were his sending of his Son to be incarnate, and the dispensation of grace of the new covenant, which is in its nature infallibly effectual unto the end whereunto it is designed.

2. God, in his infinite wisdom, foresaw all the interveniencies on our part that might obstruct the certain accomplishment of the promise. The promise was first given indefinitely unto all mankind, in our first parents; but soon after, the wickedness of the whole world, with their absolute contempt of the grace of the promise, was such as that any creature would conceive that it would be of none effect, being so visibly, so universally rejected and despised. But a perfect view hereof lying under the wisdom of God, he provided against it, for the immutability of his purpose and infallibility of his promise, by singling out first one, then another, and at last the whole posterity of Abraham, towards whom the promise should be accomplished. But yet, after a long season, there came the last and uttermost trial of the whole matter: for the generality of the seed of Abraham rejected the promise also; whereby it appeared really to have been frustrated, and to be of none effect, as our apostle declares in his answer to that objection, Rom. 9:6. But instead of changing his purpose, God then more fully discovered wherein the immutability of his counsel did consist, and whereon it

did depend; as Gal. 3:8. And this was, that all along, and under all those apostasies, he ever had, and ever will have in the world, an elect people, chosen by him before the foundation of the world, in and towards whom his purpose is immutable and his promise infallible. No interveniency can possibly shake or alter what hath been settled by infinite wisdom. There is not a particular believer but is made so sensible of his own unworthiness, that, at one time or another, he cannot but be almost brought to a loss how it should be that such a one as he should ever inherit the promise; but God foresaw all that hath befallen us, or will do so, and hath, in his infinite wisdom, provided against all interveniencies, that his purpose might not be changed, nor his promise frustrated.

Obs. IV. Infinite goodness, as acting itself in Christ, was not satisfied in providing and preparing good things for believers, but it would also show and declare it unto them, for their present consolation.

God was "willing to show to the heirs of promise;" and the end was, that they might have "strong consolation." As it is with a good, wise father and an obedient son: The father is possessed of a large and profitable estate, and as the son hath a present allowance suitable to his condition, so, being obedient, he hath a just expectation that in due time he shall enjoy the whole inheritance: this being usual amongst men, and that which the law of nature directs unto; for parents are to lay up for their children, and not children for their parents. But the whole being yet absolutely in the father's power, it is possible he may otherwise dispose of it, and it may not come to the right heir. But now, if the father seeth his son on some occasion to want encouragement, or he be to put him on any difficult service, where he may meet with storms and dangers, he will show unto him his deed of settlement, wherein he hath irrevocably confirmed unto him the whole inheritance. So God deals with believers, with his children, in this case. He is rich in grace, mercy, and glory; and all his children are heirs of it, "heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8:17;—that is, of the whole inheritance that God hath provided for his children. This they have an expectation of by the promise, according to the law of the new covenant. But although their state be thus secured by their being heirs of the promise, yet God, knowing that they have a difficult work and warfare to go through withal, and what it is to serve him in temptations, for their encouragement and consolation he produceth and showeth them his irrevocable deed of settlement; namely, his promise confirmed by his oath, whereby the whole inheritance is infallibly secured unto them. He was free and

willing to "show it unto the heirs of promise." At first God gave out a mere precept as the declaration of his will, and a promise couched in a threatening. This was that which divine goodness, acting in a way of nature, did require, and whereof man had no cause to complain; for as the mind of God was sufficiently declared therein, so man in himself had no grounds of discouragement from a compliance therewith. And God might so deal with us all, giving out the whole revelation of his will in a system of precepts, as some seem to suppose that he hath done. But things are now changed on two accounts. For,—

1. It was herein the peculiar design of God to glorify his goodness, love, grace, and mercy, by Jesus Christ; and he will do it in an abundant manner. He had before glorified his eternal power and infinite wisdom, in the creation of the world and all things therein contained, Ps. 19:1–3; Rom. 1:20. And he had glorified his holiness and righteousness, in giving of the law accompanied with eternal rewards and punishments. But "grace and truth" (in the provision of it, and the accomplishment of the promise) "came by Jesus Christ," John 1:17. And therefore, that the Lord Christ in all this may have the pre-eminence, he will do it in an abundant and unconceivable manner, above the former declarations of his glory in any other of his attributes. Hence in the Scripture the communication of grace is expressed in words that may intimate its exceeding, and passing all understanding: Rom. 5:20, Ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις,—"Grace" did by Christ "more than abound." To abound, expresseth the largest comprehensible measures and degrees; but that which doth "more than abound," who can conceive? 1 Tim. 1:14, Ὑπερεπλεόνασε δὲ ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου, —"The grace of our Lord did more than abound;" it exceeded all comprehension. So that glory which is the effect of this grace is said to be given καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν, 2 Cor. 4:17; that is, in an excellency and exceeding greatness no way to be conceived. So, plainly the apostle calls the grace of God in Christ ὑπερβάλλοντα πλοῦτον, Eph. 2:7,—"excelling riches." That we may know his meaning, he calls it again, chap. 3:8, τὸν ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτον, —"riches whereof there is no investigation." In the pursuit of this design to exercise and manifest the infinite fulness of his love and goodness, he will not satisfy himself with a mere declaration of his will, but he will have those concerned in it to know it, to understand it, to have the present comfort of it; and because they could not do that without satisfaction in the immutability of his counsel, he evidenceth that unto them by all means possible. And thereby he sufficiently manifests how willing he is, how well-pleasing it is unto him, that our faith in him should be firm and steadfast.

2. Man is now fallen into a condition of sin and misery. And herein is he filled with so many fears, discouragements, and despondencies, that it is the difficultest thing in the world to raise him unto any hopes of mercy or favour from God. In this lost, forlorn estate, divine goodness, by an infinite condescension, accommodates itself unto our weakness and our distress. He doth not, therefore, only propose his mind and will unto us as unto grace and glory, but useth all ways possible to ingenerate in us a confidence of his willingness to bring us unto a participation of them. He doth every thing that may direct and encourage us to take a steadfast view of the excellency and immutability of his counsel in this matter. Hence a great part of the Scripture, the revelation of God's will, is taken up in promises, exhortations, invitations, discourses and expressions of love, kindness, and compassion. And in particular, although the promise itself was an abundant security for faith to rest upon, as to the immutability of God's counsel, yet, to obviate all pretences and cast out all excuses, he confirms it with his oath. And although he did this in particular and expressly unto Abraham, yet he takes all believers, who are his seed, into a participation of the same privilege with him, and manifests how that in swearing unto him he sware also unto them all. And two things do hence naturally ensue:—

(1.) The unspeakable encouragement unto believing, which is given unto all unto whom this counsel of God and its immutability are proposed. The essential truth of God and his oath are openly and manifestly engaged unto these two things: [1.] That nothing but unbelief shall keep off any from the enjoyment of the promise; [2.] That all believers, whatever difficulties they may meet withal in themselves, or objections against themselves, shall certainly and infallibly enjoy the promise and be saved. And the immutability of God's counsel herein he hath made so evident, that there is no room for any objection against it. This is tendered unto you unto whom the gospel is proposed. Greater encouragement unto believing, and more certainty of the event, you shall never have in this world, you cannot have,—God will not, God cannot give. All persons not yet come up unto believing, unto whom this peace with God is preached, are distinguished into two sorts,—"them that are nigh," and "them that are afar off," Eph. 2:17. This, in the first place, expresseth the Jews and Gentiles; but, in a parity of reason, it must be extended unto others. Some are comparatively "nigh," such as have been affected with the word, and brought unto inquiries whether they should believe or no; and there are some "afar off," who as yet have taken little notice of these things. Herein is both a call and encouragement

unto both. To the first, to determine their wills in the choice of Christ in the promise; unto the other, to look up unto him, though from the ends of the earth. But I must not enlarge.

(2.) It discovers the heinous nature of unbelief. The gospel, which is a message of love, peace, mercy, and grace, yet never makes mention of unbelief but it annexeth damnation unto it: "He that believeth not shall be damned." And although they shall also perish unto whom the gospel is not preached, Rom. 2:12, yet the gospel, though it speaks not exclusively unto others, yet principally it declares the inevitable destruction, the everlasting damnation, of them who believe not when the promise is declared to them, 2 Thess. 1:6–10; however, it declares that they shall fall under a sorer death and destruction than any others, 2 Cor. 2:16. And the reason of this severity is taken partly from the nature of unbelief, and partly from the aggravation of it. The nature of unbelief consists in a refusal of the testimony of God, so making him a liar, 1 John 5:10; and in esteeming that which he proposeth as his power and wisdom, to be, weakness and folly. Hence there is no way of sin or rebellion against God whatever that casts such scorn and indignity upon him. So that it is in itself the greatest of sins, as well as the root and cause of them. Yet such is the blindness of corrupted nature, that many who will boggle at other sins, especially such as look with a severe threatening aspect on a natural conscience, as adultery, theft, and murder, yet concern themselves not at all in this unbelief, but rather approve themselves in their infidelity. Yet is there not one unto whom the gospel is preached, but if he do not really receive the Lord Christ as tendered in the promise, he doth what lies in him to declare God to be a liar, foolish in his counsels and weak in his operations. And what account this will come unto is not hard to discern. Moreover, it is also from the aggravation that it is accompanied withal, from the nature of the thing itself and the way whereby it is proposed unto us: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:3. We may look only on that which lies before us; namely, the infinite condescension of divine goodness, in showing, manifesting, and declaring, the immutability of his counsel by oath. Whereas, therefore, he hath done all to this end that was possible to be done, and more than ever would have entered into the heart of any creature to desire or expect, the woful condition of unbelievers, both as to this sin and the misery which will follow thereon, is inexpressible. For those that will despise all that God will do, yea all that he can

do, to give them assurance of the truth and stability of his promises, given in a way of grace, have no reason to expect, nor shall receive any thing, but what he will do and can do in a way of justice and vengeance.

Obs. V. It is not all mankind universally, but a certain number of persons, under certain qualifications, to whom God designs to manifest the immutability of his counsel, and to communicate the effects thereof.

It is only the "heirs of promise" whom God intendeth. But herein two things are to be considered: 1. The outward revelation or administration of these things; and, 2. God's purpose therein. The former is made promiscuously and indefinitely unto all to whom the gospel is preached; for therein is contained a declaration of the immutability of God's counsel and his willingness to have it known. But if God did design the communication of the effect of it in the same latitude with the outward administration of it, then must he be thought to fail in his purpose towards the greatest part of them, who receive it not. This is that which the apostle disputes upon, Rom. 9. Having supposed that the generality of the Jews, of the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, were cut off from the promise by unbelief, and declared his sense thereon, verses 1–3, he raiseth an objection against that supposition, verse 6, 'That if it were so, "the promise of God was of none effect," for unto them all it was given and declared.' Hereunto the apostle answers and replies in that and the following verses, 7–21. And the substance of his answer is, that although the promise was promiscuously proposed unto all, yet the grace of it was intended only unto the elect; as he also further declares, chap. 11:7. But why then doth God thus cause the declaration to be made promiscuously and indefinitely unto all, if it be some only whom he designs unto a participation of the effects of his counsel and good things promised? I answer,—

Let us always remember that in these things we have to do with Him who is greater than we, and who giveth no account of his matters. What if God will take this way of procedure, and give no reason of it? who are we, that we should dispute against God? Wherefore our apostle having at large discoursed this whole matter, and pleaded the absolute freedom of God to do whatever he pleaseth, winds up the whole in a resignation of all unto his sovereignty, with a deep admiration of his unsearchable wisdom; wherein it is our duty to acquiesce, Rom. 11:33–36. But yet I may add,—

That the nature of the thing itself doth require this dispensation of the promise indefinitely to all, though the benefit of it be designed to some only; for the way whereby God will give a participation of the promise unto the heirs of it being by the administration of his word, and such means as are meet to work on the minds of men to persuade and prevail with them unto faith and obedience, he would not do it by immediate revelation or inspiration, and the like extraordinary operations of his Spirit alone, but by such ways as are suited to glorify himself and his grace in the rational minds of his creatures capable thereof. Now this could no way be done, nor can unto this day, but by the declaration and preaching of the promise, with commands, motives, and encouragements unto believing. In this work all those whom he employs are utterly ignorant who they are who are heirs of the promise, until they are discovered by their actual believing: wherefore they have no other way, but in the first place to propose the promise promiscuously unto all that will attend unto it, leaving the singling out of its proper heirs unto the sovereign grace of God. So the word is preached unto all indefinitely, and "the election obtaineth," whilst "the rest are hardened."

Obs. VI. God alone knows the due measure of divine condescension, or what becomes the divine nature therein.—Who could have once apprehended, who durst have done so, that the holy God should swear by himself, to confirm his word and truth unto such worthless creatures as we are? Indeed there is yet a more transcendent act of divine condescension, namely, the incarnation of the Son of God, the glory whereof will be the object of the admiration of men and angels unto eternity; for, alas! what created understanding could ever have raised itself unto a thought that the eternal Word should be made flesh? God alone, who is infinitely wise, only wise, knew what became the holiness of his being and his goodness therein. And so is it, in its measure, in this of his oath. And as we are with holy confidence to make use of what he hath done in this kind, seeing not to do so is to despise the highest expression of his goodness; so we are not in any thing to draw divine condescension beyond divine expressions.

Obs. VII. So unspeakable is the weakness of our faith, that we stand in need of unconceivable divine condescension for its confirmation.—The immutability of God's counsel is the foundation of our faith; until this be manifest, it is impossible that ever faith should be sure and steadfast. But who would not think that God's declaration thereof by the way of promise were every way sufficient thereunto? But God knew that we yet stood in need of more;

not that there was want of sufficient evidence in his promise, but such a want of stability in us as stood in need of a superabundant confirmation, as we shall see in the next verse:—

Ver. 18.—"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Two things in general the apostle further designs in this verse: 1. That the declaration which God had made of the immutability of his counsel in this matter was every way sufficient and satisfactory. 2. What was the especial end and design which he had therein towards the heirs of promise.

Διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων. For the FIRST, he doth it by declaring the evidence given and the nature of it; which consisted in "two immutable things,"—διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων. Πρᾶγμα is an "act" or deed, such as we make and deliver when we convey any thing from one to another,—an instrument of an assurance. This is the promise and the oath of God. Security is given by them, both from their own nature, and also because they are two,—two witnesses whereby the thing intended is established. But what need was there of two such things? Is it because one of these was weak, infirm, alterable, such as may be justly challenged or excepted against, that the other is added to strengthen and confirm it? 'No,' saith the apostle, 'both of them are equally "immutable." ' Wherefore we must still carry along with us the infinite and unconceivable condescension of God in this matter, who, to obviate our temptations, and relieve us under our weaknesses, is pleased to give this variety unto his divine testimony,' which he did "ex abundanti;" not only beyond what he was any way obliged unto, but whatever we could desire or expect.

For, secondly, this makes the evidence absolute and uncontrollable, that as they are two things which are produced to make it good, so they are both of them equally immutable,—such as neither in their own nature nor in their execution were any way exposed or liable unto alteration. For the promise itself was absolute, and the thing promised depended on no condition in us,—on nothing without God himself. For there was in the promise itself all the springs of all that is good, and of deliverance from all that is evil; so that on every side it brings along with it the condition of its own accomplishment. But whereas God in the covenant of works did give no promise unto mankind but what was conditional, and suspended on such things on our part as might or might not be,—whence it came to pass that we sinned and came short of it,—God in the

giving out of this promise, which is the foundation of the covenant of grace, to assure us that it is utterly of another nature, and such as on no occurrence is liable unto change, confirms it with his oath.

Ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι Θεόν. Moreover, the apostle confirmeth this testimony yet further from the nature of Him by whom it was given: Ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι Θεόν,—"In" (or "by") "which it was impossible that God should lie" or "deceive." Ψεύσασθαι is not absolutely "to lie," but by any means "to deceive" him who hath cause to trust what we say or do. The highest security among men consists in a promise confirmed with an oath; and this is, and must be, unto them "an end of all strife," for higher they cannot go. But yet it is possible there may be a lie and deceit in their testimony, and he who trusts unto them may be deceived, as it often falls out in the world; for although the things themselves are good, and such as would secure the interest of truth only, yet men that use them are changeable, yea liars. But it is God who makes use of them in our case; and therefore it is impossible that he should lie. God having made this double engagement of his truth and faithfulness, it is utterly impossible that he should deceive any one thereby.

But why doth the apostle put an emphasis upon this, that by these things it was impossible that God should lie, or deceive? for it is necessary unto God, from his own being, that it should in all things be impossible for him to lie. He cannot lie, he cannot deceive, he cannot deny himself, or his word; these things are repugnant unto his being. I answer, that the apostle speaks not of the nature of the things themselves, but of their manifestation with respect unto us. Nothing was added to the promise of God to render it more certain, firm, and stable; but an addition was made unto it to give our minds greater security. God's immutability in promising, and impossibility in deceiving, are both equally from his nature; but the distinct proposition of them is needful unto our encouragement and establishment.

Obs. VIII. Fallen, sinful man stands in need of the utmost encouragement that divine condescension can extend unto, to prevail with him to receive and lay hold of the promise of grace and mercy by Jesus Christ.

There is nothing that we are so prone unto, as to distrust the promises of God; nothing that we are with more difficulty won over unto, than to mix them with faith. To evidence this we may consider,—

1. That the first entrance of sin into the world was by a disbelief of the truth of God; yea, that very sin formally consisted in an apprehension that God, in his promises and threatenings, had a mind to deceive us, Gen. 3:4–6. And as sin thus laid its foundation by the craft of Satan, so it endeavours to carry on its building. It continually suggests to the hearts and minds of men that they shall certainly be deceived in trusting to God's promises. For,—

(1.) Secret thoughts there are in the hearts of men,—which are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,"—that neither the promises nor threatenings of God are true, in the terms and sense wherein they are proposed unto them. They neither think that it shall be so bad with any as he threateneth, nor so well as he promiseth. Did men believe the threatenings of God as to the fearful and eternal ruin of sinners, it were not possible they should live in sin as they do, without any endeavour of amendment, so to flee from the wrath to come. Nor do they think in their hearts that it shall be with them that believe according as God hath promised. They say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil," Zeph. 1:12,—namely, as he hath either promised or threatened.

(2.) Men think that there are still some reserves and latent conditions in the promises and threatenings of God, and that God knows it shall be otherwise than they seem to portend. By this imagination Satan deceived our first parents as to the truth of God in his threatening. He persuaded them that there was a reserve therein, that was directly contrary unto what the words of it declared; and that by transgressing of his command they should not die, but be wise and like himself. And still men suppose that the promises propose a fair ground, indeed, but that if they should go to build upon it, there is a mine under it, which would be sprung at one time or another, unto their ruin. They cannot apprehend that it shall be with them according unto and as the promise doth declare. If they should attempt to believe, yet one latent condition or other would defeat them of obtaining it; whereas, indeed, the whole and entire condition of enjoying the promise is faith alone.

(3.) Whatever may be the truth of the promise, yet they cannot conceive that God intends them therein; whereas yet there is no declaration or intention of God, whereby our duty is to be regulated and whereon we shall be judged, but what is contained and expressed in the proposal of the promise itself.

On these and the like grounds, the great contest in the world, between God and man, is whether God be true or a liar in his promise. It is not thus directly stated in the minds of men, for they have many other pretences why they do not believe; but this is that which it is resolved into. For "he that receiveth not the testimony of God, maketh him a liar." So was it with the people in the wilderness, whose carcasses fell therein because of their unbelief. The reasons they pretended and pleaded why they would not attempt to enter the land of Canaan, were, that the people were strong, and giants among them, and the cities walled, Num. 13:28, 32, 33; but the true reason was, their unbelief of God's promise: wherefore God expresseth the sense of his indignation against them with that scheme of reproach, "Ye shall bear your iniquities, and ye shall know my breach of promise," chap. 14:34, or 'see what your unbelief hath brought you unto.' And no otherwise is it with all unbelievers at present, as our apostle at large declares, chap. 3 of this epistle. Other things are pretended as the causes of their unbelief, but it is their dissatisfaction in the truth of God that is the true and only cause of it. And as this sufficiently manifests the heinousness of unbelief, so it glorifies the righteousness of God in the condemnation of unbelievers.

2. The curse of the law having, by the guilt of sin, been admitted unto a dominion over the whole soul, it is a great thing to receive and admit of a testimony to the contrary, such as the promise is. What the law speaks, it speaks unto them that are under it, as all men are by nature. And it speaks in the heart of every man that the sinner must die. Conscience complies also, and adds its suffrage thereunto. This fixeth a conclusion in the mind that so it will be, whatever may be offered unto the contrary. But so is the testimony of God in the promise, namely, that there is a way of life and salvation for sinners; and that God offereth this way and an interest therein unto us. Nothing but the exceeding greatness of the power of grace can enable a guilty sinner in this case to "set to his seal that God is true."

3. When the promise comes, and is proposed unto us, for the most part it finds us deeply engaged into, and, as to ourselves, immutably fixed on other things, that are inconsistent with faith in the promises. Some are interested in divers lusts and pleasures; some are filled with inveterate prejudices, through a vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers; and some have some good hopes in themselves, that in the way wherein they are, by the religion which they profess, and the duties which they perform, they may in time arrive unto what they aim at. When the promise is proposed, the first thing included

therein is an utter relinquishment of all these things. As it is a promise of grace, so it excludes every thing but grace. Wherefore, when it is proposed unto any, it doth not only require that it be believed, or God be believed therein, but also, that in order thereunto we part with and utterly renounce all hopes and confidences in ourselves, from what we are or expect to be, and betake ourselves for life and salvation unto the promise alone. Some imagine that it is a very easy thing to believe, and that the souls of men are but deceived, when they are called off from the duties that light and conviction put them upon to the way of faith in the promise; but the truth is, that what from its own nature, and from what is required thereunto or comprised therein, it is, as the most important, so the highest and greatest duty that we are called unto, and which men would of their own choice rather grind in a still of the most burdensome duties than once apply their minds unto.

4. The guilt of sin hath filled the mind of every sinner with innumerable fears, doubts, and confusions, that are very difficultly satisfied or removed; yea, the remainders of them do abide in believers themselves, and ofttimes fill them with great perplexities. And these, when the promise is proposed unto them, arise and follow one another like the waves of the sea, James 1:6. No sooner is one of them answered or waived, but immediately another supplies its room. And in them all doth unbelief put forth its power.

And on these grounds it is that poor sinners have such need of the reduplication of divine assurances, that, notwithstanding all pretences unto the contrary, the promise of grace in Christ shall be made good and be accomplished unto them.

Ἵνα ἐχωμεν ἰσχυρὰν παράχλησιν. SECONDLY, The especial design of God, in this dispensation and condescension, is ἵνα ἐχωμεν ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν etc.; —"that we might have a strong consolation." Being engaged in the application of his instance, in the promise and oath of God given unto Abraham, the apostle here plainly dismisseth the consideration of things past under the old testament, in those blessings and temporal things which were typical of things spiritual, and applies the whole unto present believers, and therein unto all those of future ages,—"that we might have." And herein he builds on this principle, that whatever God promised, designed, sware unto Abraham, that he did so promise unto all believers whatever; so that every promise of the covenant belongeth equally unto them with him or any other. And two things the

apostle lays down concerning such believers: 1. What God designs unto them; 2. Such a description of them as contains the qualifications necessary unto a participation of what is so designed:—

1. The first is παράκλησις. It sometimes signifies "exhortation," an encouraging, persuasive exhortation. And in that sense it is here taken by some expositors, as Theophylact and Œcumenius;—'that we might have thereby a prevalent "exhortation" unto faith and patience in believing.' But "comfort" or "consolation" is the most usual signification of the word in the New Testament, as I have showed elsewhere; and that sense of the word alone can be here intended. A consolation it is that ariseth from the assurance of faith, and of our interest thereby in the promises of God. This is that which relieves our souls against all fears, doubts, and troubles; for it either obviates and prevents them, or it outbalanceth them, and bears up our souls against them. For comfort is the relief of the mind, whatever it be, against sorrow and trouble.

And this consolation which God intends and designs for believers is ἰσχυρά, —"solamen fortissimum," "forte," "validum," "potens;" "strong," "powerful," "prevalent." Strong so as to be prevalent against opposition, is that which is intended. There are comforts to be taken, or are often taken, from earthly things; but they are weak, languid, and such as fade and die upon the first appearance of a vigorous opposition; but this consolation is strong and prevalent against all creature-oppositions whatever. Strong; that is, such as will abide against all opposition,—a strong tower, an impregnable fortress, a munition of rocks. For it is not the abounding of consolation in us, but the prevalency of the causes of it against opposition, that is intended.

Οἱ καταφυγόντες. 2. There is the description of the persons unto whom God designs this consolation by the promise, confirmed with his oath: Οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος. There are three things in this description of believers, or the heirs of the promise: (1.) The way whereby they seek for relief; they "flee for refuge." (2.) The relief itself which they seek after; which is "the hope set before them." (3.) The way whereby they are made partakers of it; they "lay hold upon it:"—

(1.) They are Οἱ καταφυγόντες: say we, that "flee for refuge;" "qui cursum corripiunt." It is the judgment of many that here is an allusion unto him who had slain a man unawares under the law, whose safety and life depended on his speedy flight into one of the cities of refuge, Num. 35:11, 12. And hereunto our translators had undoubtedly respect, whereon they rendered the word, "fleeing

for refuge." And indeed the word itself signifies such an action as is there ascribed unto the man-slayer. For καταφυγεῖν, properly, "cursum corripere," hath respect unto two things: [1.] An apprehension of danger, or a real surprisal with it, whereon a man takes his flight for deliverance. And so it was with the man-slayer; his apprehension of the approach of the avenger of blood, to take away his life, stirred him up καταφυγεῖν,—to flee from the place and condition wherein he was, lest evil should overtake him. [2.] Speed and diligence in an endeavour to attain that place, or company, or end, which a man proposeth unto himself as the means of his deliverance, and whereby he hopes to find safety. He that doth so flee casts off all tergiversation, stirs up himself, gives no place to sloth or vain hopes, and useth his utmost diligence in the pursuit of his safety. And hereby doth the Holy Ghost lively express the state and condition of all the heirs of promise in this matter. In themselves by nature, as they are children of the first Adam, they are all exposed, upon the guilt of sin original and actual, unto the sentence of the law. God by various means is pleased to awaken them unto the consideration of the danger wherein they are, the execution of that curse which they are obnoxious unto being impendent over them. In this condition they see a necessity of seeking out for relief, as knowing that if it be not obtained they must perish, and that eternally. Love of sin, compliance with the world, hopes of righteousness of their own, do all endeavour variously to retard and hinder them in their design; but when God proceeds to shut them up, to sharpen their convictions, and continually to represent their condition unto them, giving them to conclude that there is no hope in their present condition, at length they stir up themselves unto a speedy flight to the "hope set before them" in the promise. And,—

Τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος. (2.) That is the second thing to be inquired into, namely, what is this "hope" that is "set before us," and how it is so: [1.] Most expositors take "hope" here, by a metonymy of the subject, for the thing hoped for; that is, grace and glory, justification and salvation by Jesus Christ. These things are the subject-matter of the promises, which we desire and hope after. And unto these we may be said to flee for relief or refuge, when in our expectation of them we are supported and comforted. [2.] Some take "hope" subjectively, for the grace of hope itself. And this we are said to "flee unto,"—that is, speedily to betake ourselves unto the exercise of it, as founded in the promises of God, foregoing all other expectations; wherein we shall find assured consolation. [3.] "Hope," by a metonymy of the effect for the cause, may express the promise itself, which is the cause and means of ingenerating hope in us. And

this I take to be the proper meaning of the place, and which is not exclusive of the other senses mentioned. The promise being proposed unto us, is the cause and object of our faith, on the account of the faithfulness of God therein. Faith brings forth hope, whose object is the same promise, or the good things thereof, as proposed from the same faithfulness. Thence is itself called "the hope," as that without which we could have none, there being neither cause of it nor object for it. And this hope is said to be "set before us," or to be proposed unto us; which it is in the declaration of the promise or the dispensation of the gospel. Therein it is proposed as the object of our faith and hope, as the means of the strong consolation which God is so abundantly willing that we should receive. And this renders the whole metaphor plain and easy: for it is evident how the promise, with all that we hope for thereby, is "set before us" and proposed unto us in the gospel; as also how we "flee" or betake ourselves thereunto in all distresses for relief. And it is more natural to allow of this metonymical expression in the word "hope," than to admit of so rough a catachresis in the other part of the words, wherein the grace of hope within us should be said to be "set before us."

Κρατῆσαι. (3.) With respect hereunto we are said to "flee κρατῆσαι;" that is, εἰς τὸ κρατῆσαι,—"to lay hold on," "fortiter apprehendere," "constanter retinere." The signification of this word, frequently used by our apostle, I have on sundry occasions before declared. It is "injectâ manu, totis viribus retinere;"—to hold fast what we lay hold on, with all our might and power. There will be many endeavours to strike off the hand of faith from laying hold on the promise; and many more to loosen its hold when it hath taken it; but it is in its nature, and it is a part of our duty, "strongly to lay hold upon," and "firmly to retain" the promise, when we have reached unto it. And there seems in the whole metaphor to be an allusion unto those who run in a race: for whereas they have a prize or βραβεῖον set before them, they first stir up themselves with all their strength to speed towards the mark; which when they have attained, they both lay fast hold on and bear it away with them as their own. So it is with believers, as to the promise proposed unto them or set before them. They reach out after it, lay hold upon it, reserve it, as to their interest in it, as the only means of their deliverance and salvation, and of that consolation which in every condition they stand in need of. And from the words so opened we may observe, that,—

Obs. IX. Sense of danger and ruin from sin is the first thing which occasions a soul to look out after Christ in the promise.—It is implied in the word καταφυγεῖν, which includes a respect unto danger to be avoided; whence we

render it, "flee for refuge." As the Lord Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance, to be a physician to the sick and not to the whole; so if men are not sensible of their lost condition, of the sin and sickness of their souls, they will never in good earnest look out after him. And therefore, as those by whom conviction of sin and humiliation for it are despised, as they are by many, despise Christ himself also, who is "the end of the law" and all its convictions "for righteousness;" so the profession of Christ and hopes of salvation by him, is in vain in all those who were never truly made sensible of sin, and the danger of eternal ruin thereby.

Obs. X. A full conviction of sin is a great and shaking surprisal unto a guilty soul.—Hence is such a one here tacitly compared unto him who had killed a man at unawares. He was just before in a condition of peace and safety, fearing no man, but with quietness and assurance attending his own occasions; but having now slain a man at unawares, he finds all things on a sudden changed round about him. Fear within and danger from without do beset him on every hand. If he seeth any man, he supposeth him the avenger of blood; and if he seeth no man, solitude is dreadful unto him. No otherwise is it with them who are thoroughly convinced of sin. They were alive, as the apostle speaks, Rom. 7, and at peace; fearing no more evil than they felt,—perhaps persuading themselves that all things were well between God and their souls, or not much solicitous whether they were or no. In this state the commandment comes and discovers their guilt, and danger thereon; and unveils the curse, which until now was hidden from them, as the avenger of blood ready to execute the sentence of the law. This being a thing which they never expected nor feared, fills them with great surprisals. Hence are those cries of such persons, "What shall we do to be saved?" that argue a great distress and no small amazement. And those who know nothing of these things are utterly ignorant both of sin and grace.

Obs. XI. The revelation or discovery of the promise, or of Christ in the promise, is that alone which directs convinced sinners into their proper course and way. This is the setting of a hope before them, wherein they are called to look unto their strong tower as prisoners of hope, that they may be brought out of the pit through the blood of the everlasting covenant.—The man-slayer probably might have many contrivances suggested in his mind how he might escape the danger whereunto he was exposed. To leave his present habitation, to lie hid, to betake himself unto woods or deserts, and the like vain hopes, might present themselves unto him. But all these things did but keep him out of his

way, and divert him from his duty; and the longer he entertained them in his thoughts, the more his danger was increased and his life hazarded. It was the remembrance alone of the city of refuge, set before him in the law, that directed him to his proper duty, and set him in his way unto safety. It is no otherwise with persons under the convictions of sin. Many things present themselves unto their minds, with hopes of relief attending them. Sin itself with a continuance therein will do so; so also will sloth, and the procrastination of present duty; but especially some duties themselves,—a righteousness by the works of the law will do so, and with many is effectual unto their ruin. Whilst these, or any of them, are attended unto, the way of duty and safety is hidden from the eyes of sinners. But when the promise, Christ in the promise, is proposed unto them, is "set before them," so soon as they direct their eyes that way, they see their course plain before them, and what it is they must betake themselves unto, if they intend a deliverance out of the condition wherein they are.

Obs. XII. Where there is the least of saving faith, upon the first discovery of Christ in the promise it will stir up the whole soul to make out towards him, and a participation of him.—As faith is begotten in the soul by the promise, so the first natural, genuine act of it tends unto a further interest in and participation of that promise. In going to Christ upon his call and invitation, in laying hold upon him in the promise, consists the nature, life, and being of the duty, obedience, and grace, of that faith which is in the heirs of promise.

Obs. XIII. It is the duty and wisdom of all those unto whom Christ in the promise is once discovered, by any gospel means or ordinance once set before them, to admit of no delay of a thorough closing with him.—Many things, yea, things innumerable, will offer themselves with subtilty and violence unto that end; yea, all the craft and power of the gates of hell will engage to the same purpose; but as faith, being really set on work, will prevail against them all, so it is our duty to avoid them, as those which, under specious pretences, strike at the life and eternal welfare of our souls.

Obs. XIV. There is a spiritual strength and vigour required unto the securing of our interest in the promise,—κρατῆσαι, "to lay fast and firm hold upon it."—The greatness of our concern therein, the opposition that will be made thereunto, the love wherewith our faith ought to be accompanied, do require the utmost of our strength and diligence herein.

Obs. XV. The promise is an assured refuge unto all sin-distressed souls who betake themselves thereunto.

Obs. XVI. Where any souls, convinced of sin by the charge of the law, and of their own lost condition thereon, do betake themselves unto the promise for relief, God is abundantly willing that they should receive strong consolation. For herein doth the nature of that faith consist which hath the promise of pardon, justification, and salvation, given unto it. And hereon I might enlarge, to manifest the true nature of that faith which hath the promises, but I must not too far digress.

Ver. 19.—"Which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

Having made mention of our "hope" with respect unto the promise of God, he adds an account of the use of that hope in the course of our faith and obedience. And he leaves herein the metonymical signification of the word, returning unto that which is proper, namely, the grace of hope in us. But this he doth not absolutely, but as it includes its object, or the promise laid hold upon by faith. For he doth not expressly mention hope itself, but includes it in the relative article, and so respects not itself alone, but its object also, which he had mentioned before,—hope as arising from, or caused by and fixed on, the promise of God. Wherefore the use of hope, as fixed on and mixed with that promise, securing our interest therein, is that which he declares in this verse. And three things are to be briefly spoken unto in the opening of these words: 1. The nature of this hope; 2. Its use and properties; 3. Its operation and effects. The first is included, the second expressed under a natural, and the third under a typical similitude:—

First, The grace of hope being not expressly mentioned, but only included in the words, and that not with respect unto its essence and nature, but its use and operation, here is no occasion given to insist upon it. Only whereas it is supposed as the principal subject of the proposition, it may briefly be spoken unto.

Ἣν. This "hope" elsewhere he calls our "confidence," and ascribes a καύχημα, a "glorying" or "boasting," unto it, Heb. 3:6; and a πληροφορία, or "full assurance," chap. 6:11. Wherefore it is that grace whereon our assurance, or that full persuasion of faith which gives confidence and glory, doth depend. And there is nothing more adverse unto it than the common notion of hope; for it is generally conceived as a dubious, uncertain, fluctuating expectation of that which may be or may not be for the future. Now although such expectations of

all sorts may be included in the general notion of hope, yet are they excluded from the nature and use of that grace of hope which is recommended unto us in the Scripture. For this is a firm trust in God for the enjoyment of the good things contained in his promises, at the appointed season, raising in the soul an earnest desire after them, and expectation of them. And for want of the knowledge of the nature of this grace, many live without any benefit of its exercise. Let two things concerning it be observed, and they will give light into its nature and use: 1. That it springs from faith, in that it fixeth all its expectation on the good things in the promise, and that as promised. But it is faith alone that receives the promise and giveth an interest therein. 2. That its nature and essence consists in trust in God; which if it be not the foundation of all its exercise, whatever may be so called is but a deceiving presumption, Ps. 33:18, 42:5, 130:5, etc. Wherefore it is the fiduciary act of faith on God in the promise, as it respects the good things of it, as yet absent, future, unenjoyed.

Secondly, The use and operation of this hope the apostle expresseth by a double metaphor, the one taken from things natural, the other from things instituted and typical. Its use he sets forth by a metaphor taken from things natural; it is the "anchor of the soul, firm and stable:" and its operation by a metaphor taken from things typical; it "entereth into that within the veil."

Ὡς ἄγκυραν τῆς ψυχῆς. First, In itself, and as unto its use, he compareth it unto an anchor; it is the "anchor of the soul:" for the souls of believers, it seems, have need of an anchor. And there is much instructive efficacy in such similitudes. They are the only lawful images in things sacred. For that which in itself is invisible, is by a suitable representation proposed unto the reason of the mind, and even objected unto sense itself. Hence, as used in the Scripture, they are eminently communicative of spiritual light and experience unto the soul. And this instructive allusion is to be taken from the principal ends of the things compared, and ought not to be extended unto other circumstances which belong not thereunto; yea, a dissimilitude is allowed in them all. Wherefore our hope, as before described, is compared unto an anchor; 1. With respect unto its use; 2. With respect unto its adjuncts and properties:—

1. As for the nature and use of an anchor, it is to hold fast the ship whereunto it doth belong, and to keep it steady. And it is principally of use at two seasons: (1.) In storms and tempests, when the art and skill of the mariners are overcome by the fierceness of the wind and sea so that they cannot steer the ship in its right course, nor preserve it from rocks or shelves. Then is an anchor cast out; which, if it have the properties here mentioned, will hold fast and retain the

ship in safety against all outward violence. (2.) When ships are in their harbour, that they may not be tossed up and down at uncertainty, that men may attend their occasions and not be driven to and fro with every wind (which our apostle alludes unto, Eph. 4:13, 14), an anchor is cast to keep the vessel steady unto its posture. There are therefore two things supposed in this allusion: (1.) That the souls of believers are sometimes exposed unto storms; and a stress of spiritual dangers, persecutions, afflictions, temptations, fears, sin, death, and the law, do make up these storms that ofttimes beat upon them. And they are compared here unto storms, [1.] Because of their violence. There are degrees in them, and some are far more urgent than others, as storms are of various sorts; but generally all of them have one degree or other of fierceness and violence. [2.] Because of their tendency. They tend in their own nature unto ruin and destruction. It falls out, indeed, sometimes, that a storm at sea, although it terrify the passengers and discompose the ship, yet, accidentally falling in with its course, for a season doth speed it in its voyage; but in their own nature all storms tend unto ruin and destruction. So likewise do all the ways and means whereby the state of believers with their interest in the promise is assaulted;—they all tend unto the ruin of their souls. It is true, through the holy, wise disposal of all things by the Lord Jesus Christ, they do for the most part issue in the growth of their faith and furtherance of their salvation; but this they have not of themselves,—their work and tendency are of another nature. Our apostle gives us a description of these storms, with the use of this anchor in them, and the success thereof in the safety of the souls of believers, Rom. 8:33, 36, 38, etc. (2.) The ordinary occasions of this life, and our duties towards God and men therein, are like the tradings of ships in their harbour; for therein also a good and sure anchor is necessary for them, the neglect of the use whereof hath proved ruinous to many. And without that which spiritually answers thereunto, we shall fluctuate up and down in all that we do, and be in continual hazard of ruin. In these seasons "hope," as before described, is the "anchor of the soul." And as that is let down through the waves and darkness of the ocean by its cable, until it comes to fix itself in the bottom; so our hope, let out as it were by the sure word of God, entereth into that wherein it fasteneth itself, and fixeth the soul.

Ἀσφαλῆ. 2. The allusion respects the properties of an anchor; which as here expressed are two, the one respecting its nature, the other its use: (1.) It is ἀσφαλής, "sure," that will not fail; it may be safely trusted unto. The substance of it is firm, the proportion of it is suited unto the burden of the ship; and it is no

fair-promising and yet deceitful engine. (2.) Βεβαίαν. In its use it is βεβαία, "firm and steadfast," which no violence of winds or storms can either break or move from its hold. Such is hope unto the soul: (1.) In its nature it is ἀσφαλής, "sure," and not a deceiving imagination. It "maketh not ashamed," Rom. 5:5, by any failure or disappointment. Groundless presumptions are the deceitful engines whereby the souls of multitudes are ruined every day,—of no more use than if the mariners should cast out a log or a burden of straw to stay their vessel in a storm. But hope, proceeding from and built on faith, is infallible, and will not deceive. (2.) In its use it is βεβαία, "firm and invincible" against all oppositions; not indeed from itself, but from the ground which it fixeth upon, namely, Christ in the promise, as the next words declare. For,—

Εἰσερχρμένην εἰς τὸ ἐσωτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος. Secondly, The way or means whereby this spiritual anchor secures our souls is expressed in the words following, "And which entereth into that within the veil." And herein there is a dissimilitude in the comparates. For an anchor is cast downwards, and fixeth itself in the earth at the bottom of the sea; but hope ascendeth upwards, and fixeth itself in heaven, or in that which is therein. And we must inquire, 1. What is this "veil;" 2. How hope "entereth it;" 3. What is "that within it" that hope entereth into:—

1. For the "veil" itself, the apostle unto that natural allusion which he insists upon adds also one that is typical, which renders the whole context figurative, as we showed before. The veil, therefore, here alluded unto, was that which parted the most holy place from the sanctuary or body of the temple. This our apostle calls "the second veil," chap. 9:3; and here "the veil" absolutely. For the body of the temple, whereinto only the priests entered to offer incense, was separated from the people by the first veil, as the most holy place was from that by the second veil. Through the former the ordinary priests passed every day to offer incense; through the latter the high priest passed, and that once a-year. Now that which was denoted hereby, with respect unto Christ and his priesthood, was the aspectable heavens, through which he passed in his ascension into the glorious presence of God. See our exposition on chap. 4:14. "Within the veil," therefore, is within and above these visible heavens, the place of God's glorious residence, the holy tabernacle not made with hands, where the Lord Christ continueth to administer for his church.

2. This hope "entereth into," or passeth through. The heavens are as a veil unto the sense and reason of men; there their sight and their thoughts are bounded,—they can neither discern nor judge of any thing that is above or

within that veil. But faith, with hope, pierceth through it;—no created thing can keep them at a distance from God himself. As an anchor stays not in the waves of the sea, as it cannot fix itself in the waters, but pierceth through them until it comes unto solid earth in the bottom; no more doth or can the hope of a believer fix itself on any thing under these heavens, but it pierceth through all till it comes within the veil. And this it doth, (1.) Under the conduct of faith, which goes before it, and presents unto it the things hoped for, Heb. 11:1; (2.) By the rule and line of the word, which on no occasion it will vary from. And,—

3. This it doth εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον,—"to that which is within." And what is it that is within this veil? Not an ark and a mercy-seat, not tables of stone and cherubim, the work of men's hands; but the things signified by them;—God himself on a throne of grace, and the Lord Christ, as the high priest of the church, standing at his right hand; God the Father as the author of the promise of grace, Christ as the purchaser of all mercy, the counsel of peace being between them both. Here hope fixeth itself, to hold the soul steadfast in all the storms and tempests that may befall it. Wherefore that which hope fixeth on within the veil, is, (1.) The Father as the author; (2.) The Lord Christ as the purchaser; (3.) The covenant as the conveyance of all grace: which were all typically represented by the things within the veil of old. And the apostle makes use of this expression for two reasons: (1.) Because our faith and hope are not now fixed and bounded on types, shadows, and obscure representations of the good things of the promise, as things were under the old testament. All these things are now passed away, and we have immediately to deal with God and Christ Jesus. (2.) To instruct the Hebrews in the nature and use of the old tabernacle institutions, and from thence in the true nature of the priesthood of Christ, which he is now returning unto. And we may observe from these words,—

Obs. XVII. That all true believers are exposed to storms and tempests in this world.—This makes anchors so necessary for them. The wise God would not have provided an anchor for them, and enjoined its use, if he had not known they would be exposed unto storms. He that dwells at peace in his house, of all things thinks least of an anchor. But we are to look for storms. Suppose we might pass our time of sojourning here without outward troubles,—which yet he is exceedingly unwise who promiseth unto himself any such thing, whilst we are in the flesh, and accompanied with so many occasions of distress on every

hand,—yet who can escape from those inward trials, exercises, and troubles, from temptations, darkness, sin, and the law, wherewith we are often tossed and afflicted, and it may be for a season not comforted? For,—

Obs. XVIII. These storms would prove ruinous unto the souls of believers, were they not indefeasibly interested by faith and hope in the promise of the gospel.—Every storm almost will be too hard for ships without cables or anchors. And as little security have we in a time of trial from any thing in ourselves, if hope hold not fast on the promise, which is the "anchor of the soul." And this it will do if it be genuine. For,—

Obs. XIX. No distance of place, no interposition of difficulties, can hinder the hope of believers from entering into the presence of, and fixing itself on God in Christ.—It pierceth through the clouds, passeth through the heavens, stops not at their glorious veil, until it comes unto the eternal Fountain and Spring of all grace and mercy. And therefore,—

Obs. XX. The strength and assurance of the faith and hope of believers is invisible unto the world.—They enter in within the veil, where no eye of reason can pursue them. There all their concerns are hid; and the secret influence which unto all purposes they have from thence is sometimes admired, sometimes derided, by the blind and wicked world. However, it is effectual to their good. For,—

Obs. XXI. Hope firmly fixed on God in Christ by the promise, will hold steady, and preserve the soul in all the storms and trials that may befall it.—It is an "anchor both sure and steadfast." Wherefore,—

Obs. XXII. It is our wisdom at all times, but especially in times of trial, to be sure that our anchor have a good holdfast in heaven.—This alone will be our preservation and security, if we are fixed on that within the veil.

Ver. 20.—"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

The apostle issueth this long digression, as he doth all his other discourses, in the person of Christ; who being "the author and finisher of our faith," with him he begins, and in him he ends continually. And three things he aims at in this verse:—

Οπου. 1. To give new assurance unto the efficacy and prevalency of hope fixed on the promise, as it enters in unto that within the veil; namely, because Christ, our high priest, is there. It enters there, ὅπου, "whither" Christ is gone. Even heaven itself would be no safe place for us to fix the anchor of our trust and hope

in, if Christ were not there; for without him there would be no throne of grace in heaven, as there could have been no typical throne in the sanctuary without the mercy-seat. And this contains the relation between the two verses; wherein we see that,—

Obs. XXIII. After the most sincere performance of the best of our duties, our comforts and securities are centred in Christ alone.—Our hope, entering within the veil, is a safe anchor, because Christ is there.

Ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος. 2. The apostle in these words, by an artificial transition, lands us on that coast which he all this while hath steered towards; and this is the priesthood of Christ as represented in that of Melchisedec. This he had asserted, chap. 5:10; but, upon the consideration of the depth of this mystery, the importance of the subject-matter of it, with the present state of the most of these Hebrews, he engageth into that long digression, for their due preparation unto the hearing and receiving of it, which we have now passed through. Wherefore, having discharged his conscience and duty towards them in various admonitions, he returns again in these words unto that design and discourse which there he had broken off. And from the nature of his digression we may learn, that,—

Obs. XXIV. As the minds of men are greatly to be prepared for the communication of spiritual mysteries unto them, so the best preparation is by the cure of their sinful and corrupt affections, with the removal of their barrenness under what they have before learned and been instructed in.—It is to no purpose, yea, it is but the putting of new wine into old bottles to the loss of all, to be daily leading men into the knowledge of higher mysteries, whilst they live in a neglect of the practice of what they have been taught already.

3. He gives an account of the Lord Christ, unto whom he hath now reduced his discourse, in sundry particulars, as,—

Ἰησοῦς. (1.) He expresseth him by his name, Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus." And by the interposition of this name here the apostle may design two things:—

[1.] To mind us of the signification of it, whence the reason of his assumption of it was taken. Jesus signifies a "Saviour;" and he was called Jesus, "because he was to save his people from their sins," Matt. 1:21. He, therefore, concerning whom all these things are affirmed is to be considered as our Saviour; who had the name of a Saviour given him by God himself, with respect unto the work which he was to do, 1 Thess. 1:10. And he is Jesus still, "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

[2.] To reflect on the common use of that name in the world. This was the name under which he was reproached, reviled, crucified and slain as a malefactor. They crucified Jesus. Wherefore the apostle, treating here of the glorious exaltation of the Son of God, that none might pretend or fancy to themselves that it was any other thing or person that he intended, he expresseth him by that name whereby he was known in the world, under which he was reproached and suffered. And this all the apostles were careful to inculcate in the first preaching of the gospel: "Jesus of Nazareth," Acts 2:22. "This Jesus hath God raised up," verse 32. "His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate," chap. 3:13. "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified," chap. 4:10. "Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree," chap 5:30. For as they testified hereby that they were not ashamed of his cross, so they laid in security for faith against all those fond imaginations which have been since vented, that Christ in heaven and in us is somewhat else than that Jesus who was crucified on the earth. This is that which, by the use of this name, he calls our faith unto, namely, that it is one and the same Jesus who was humbled and is exalted, who died ignominiously, and lives for ever in glory.

Obs. XXV. This same Jesus is our Saviour in every state and condition; the same on the cross, and the same at the right hand of the Majesty on high.—Hence he is still represented in heaven as "a Lamb slain," Rev. 5:6. And all apprehensions unto the contrary are destructive unto the whole foundation of the gospel.

Πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. (2.) He describes him by that office and action whence our hope receives its great encouragement to enter within the veil, namely, that he is πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν,—a "forerunner for us," and as such is entered in thither.

In this place alone is this title assigned unto the Lord Christ, though the things intended in it are elsewhere expressed. And so it must be said concerning the name of a "surety," which our apostle makes use of in the next chapter, verse 22. Great, mysterious truths may often be comprised in one word, used and employed by the Holy Ghost for our instruction; and therefore every word of the Scripture is diligently to be searched into.

It is indifferent whether we render the words, "the forerunner for us" (that is, our forerunner) "is entered;" or "the forerunner is entered for us." In the first way, the qualification of his person, a forerunner for us; in the latter, the design of his action, the forerunner acting for us, is intended. Both come to the same

purpose; and our translators so place the words as if they inclined unto the latter sense. Two things we are to inquire into: [1.] What is a forerunner. [2.] What the Holy Ghost would instruct us in by this ascription unto Christ, or he is a forerunner entering within the veil for us.

Πρόδρομος, "precursor," is one who in an affair of public concern makes speed by himself unto the place whereunto the affair belongs, to give an account of it, and to dispose of all things needful and suited unto the disposal of the affair that he reports. Commonly, indeed, such a public harbinger is inferior unto those who come after, under whose conduct the main of the affair doth abide; but this is only where he who is the forerunner or harbinger is so and no more. But now, although the Lord Christ be a forerunner also, yet he is more; he is the person in whose hand lieth the whole affair and its conduct. And he was himself the forerunner because of the greatness of the matter he had in hand, not manageable by any other. And we may consider the words distinctly: 1st. His being a "forerunner;" 2dly. "For us;" 3dly. Where he is so,—"within the veil."

Πρόδρομος. 1st. He is, in his entrance into heaven, or the holy place, πρόδρομος, a "forerunner." This the high priest of old, when he entered once a-year into the holy place, was not. He entered thereinto himself, but he made no way for any to follow after. He did not go before the people, to give them an entrance into the holy place; but both by his entrance and his return signified their exclusion for ever. We have, then, herein another instance of the excellency of our high priest and his office. When he entered into the holy place, he did it not merely for himself, but to go before, to lead and conduct the whole church into the same glory.

Ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. 2dly. He is a forerunner ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, "for us;" that is, for all believers, for the whole church, in all times, ages, and places. And this he is three ways:—

(1st.) By way of declaration. It belongs unto a forerunner to carry tidings, and to declare what is the success that hath been obtained in the affair which he giveth an account of. The Lord Christ, entering into heaven, makes an open declaration that he hath led captivity captive, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphed over them; that he hath obtained his portion, and divided the spoil with the strong, Isa. 53:12; that he hath rescued his church from the power of sin, Satan, death, and the law. And there were two parts of the triumphant declaration made by this forerunner of the church: [1st.] That he had discharged

his original engagement for the salvation of believers under the old testament, on the faith whereof they were accepted with God and saved. Hence, upon his entrance within the veil, they also join in that doxology, Rev. 5:9–12. And he was their forerunner also. For although I have no apprehension of the "limbus patrum" fancied by the Papists, yet I think the fathers that died under the old testament had a nearer admission into the presence of God upon the ascension of Christ than what they enjoyed before. They were in heaven before, the sanctuary of God; but were not admitted within the veil, into the most holy place, where all the counsels of God in Christ are displayed and represented. There was no entrance before, either as to grace or glory, within the veil, Heb. 9:8; for, as I said, within the veil are all the counsels of God in Christ laid open, as they were typed in the holy place. This none could or were to behold before his own entrance thither. Wherefore he was their forerunner also. [2dly.] To declare the redemption of all the elect that were to follow him in their several generations. This is triumphantly declared in heaven, Ps. 47:5–7, 68:18, 24–26.

(2dly.) By way of preparation. And this is twofold: [1st.] With respect unto our present gracious entrance into the holiest by faith and prayer. This way was not made for us whilst the old tabernacle was standing, Heb. 9:8; but this way is now prepared for us by our forerunner, Heb. 10:19–22. We have an entrance into heaven even whilst we are here on the earth. An entrance is made for our faith, for our hope, for our prayer. Wherever they enter, our souls do enter and are present. And this entrance we make daily, and that with boldness and assurance, on the account of our forerunner. [2dly.] As unto our future entrance into glory. Under this capacity, as a forerunner, it belongs unto him to prepare mansions for us in his Father's house, whither he is gone; and which he hath promised to do, John 14:2, 3. He prepares mansions for us, and he prepares us for those mansions, suiting grace and glory unto each other. Heaven, indeed, is ready for us, whenever we are meet and ready for heaven.

(3dly.) By the way of possession. He had now obtained for the church eternal redemption; and purchased for them, and in their name, an everlasting inheritance, Acts 26:18. This he went, for them and in their name, to take possession of; and to reserve it in the heavens for them, 1 Pet. 1:4. Hereon, being by adoption made heirs of God, they come to be co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17; and are at last admitted into the same glory with him. So is he a forerunner for us.

3dly. As a forerunner he is "entered within the veil;" that is, into heaven itself, the place of the glorious presence of God. And this also may be considered two ways:—

(1st). With respect unto what he hath already done for us; and two things are included therein: [1st.] That he hath completely finished the work he had to do upon the earth. He had absolutely won the victory, and secured the church from all its spiritual adversaries. Without this, a triumphant entrance into heaven had not been granted unto him. [2dly.] God's blessed approbation of all that he had done here below, Isa. 53:11, 12; Phil. 2:6–11.

(2dly.) With respect unto what he hath yet to do for us. Hence it is that he is not said absolutely to enter into his glory, but to enter as a priest, as through a veil, as into the holy place; where he continues as our forerunner in the exercise of that office, as the apostle declares in the close of the verse, "Made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;" whereof we must treat in the next chapter.

Obs. XXVI. Now the Lord Jesus being thus entered into heaven as our forerunner, gives us manifold security of our entrance thither also in the appointed season.—This he assures us of, John 14:3, 19. For, 1. He passed through all the storms of trials, temptations, persecutions, and death itself, that we are exposed unto, and yet is landed safely in eternal glory. His anchor was trust and hope in all his storms, Heb. 2:13; Isa. 50:7–9. And it was tried to the utmost, Ps. 22:8–10. It preserved him in them all; and will be no less faithful unto the whole church. As he hath thus gone before us, he is able to succour us, and hath given us in himself a pledge of success. 2. He is now where our hope is fixed, namely, within the veil, where he takes care of it, and will preserve it unto the end.

Obs. XXVII. Again; if the Lord Christ be entered into heaven as our forerunner, it is our duty to be following him with all the speed we can.—And it is required hereunto, 1. That we be willing to follow him in the way wherein he went, as well as unto the place whither he is gone. And the way he went was, (1.) The way of obedience, Heb. 5:8, 9; (2.) The way of suffering, Heb. 12:2. Holiness and the cross are the two essential parts of the way whereby our forerunner entered into glory. 2. That we burden not ourselves with any thing that will retard us, Heb. 12:1.

Obs. XXVIII. And we may see whereon the security of the church doth depend, as to the trials and storms which it undergoes in this world.—He that can consider the opposition that is made unto it in the world; the counsel, the

power, and the malice, which are engaged unto its ruin, on the one hand; and its own weakness, solitariness, and helplessness, on the other, cannot but admire whence it is that it is preserved one moment from destruction.

There is no proportion between its visible defence and the visible opposition that is made unto it. It is Jesus, our forerunner, who is within the veil taking care of all our concerns, that is alone our security.

Obs. XXIX. And what will he not do for us, who in the height of his glory is not ashamed to be esteemed our forerunner? what love, what grace, what mercy may we not expect from him? And,—

Obs. XXX. When our hope and trust enter within the veil, it is Christ as our forerunner that in a peculiar manner they are to fix and fasten themselves upon.

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CHAPTER 7

THERE are almost as many different analyses given of this chapter as there are commentators upon it; and sometimes the same person proposeth sundry of them, without a determination of what he principally adheres unto. All of them endeavour to reduce the whole discourse of the apostle unto such a method as they judge most artificial and argumentative. But, as I have elsewhere observed, the force of the apostle's reasonings doth not absolutely depend on any such method of arguing as we have framed unto ourselves. There is something in it more heavenly and sublime, suited to convey the efficacy of spiritual truth, as to the understanding, so to the will and affections also. For this reason I shall not insist on the reducing of this discourse unto any precise logical analysis, which none of the ancients do attempt. But whereas those methods which are proposed by learned men, whereunto, in their judgment, the apostle's arguing is reducible, are only diverse, and not contradictory unto one another, the consideration of all, or any of them, may be of good use to give light unto sundry passages in the context. Those who have laboured herein with most appearance of accuracy, are Piscator and Gomarus. My design being to examine and consider all the apostle's arguings, and their connections particularly, I shall content myself with a plain and obvious account of the whole in general.

The design of the apostle in this chapter is not to declare the nature or the exercise of the priesthood of Christ, though the mention of them be occasionally inserted in some passages of it; for the nature of it he had spoken unto, chap. 5, and treats of its use at large, chap. 9. But it is of its excellency and dignity that he discourseth in this place; and that not absolutely neither, but in comparison with the Levitical priesthood of the church under the old testament. As this was directly conducing unto his end, so it was incumbent on him in the first place to confirm; for if it were not so excellent, it was to no purpose to persuade them to embrace it who were actually in the enjoyment of

another. This, therefore, he designeth to prove, and that upon principles avowed by themselves, with light and evidence taken from what was received and acknowledged in the church of the Hebrews from the first foundation of it. After this, he manifests abundantly the excellency of this priesthood from its nature and use also. But he was, in the first place, to evince it from the faith and principles of the ancient church of Israel; which he doth in this chapter: for he declares how God had many ways instructed them to expect an alteration of the Levitical priesthood, by the introduction of another, more useful, efficacious, and glorious; the continuance of them both in the church at the same time being inconsistent.

Herein were the authority and infinite wisdom of God made manifest in his dealing with the church of old. By his authority he obliged them unto a religious observance of all those institutions which he had then appointed; this he did unto the last day of the continuance of that state of the church, Mal. 4:4–6. But in his infinite wisdom, he had before them, in them, and with them, inlaid instructions for the church, whereby they might see, know, and believe, that they were all to cease and issue in something better, afterwards to be introduced. So Moses himself, in all that he did in the house of God, gave testimony unto what was to be spoken and declared afterwards, Heb. 3:5.

And with respect unto both of these did that church greatly miscarry. For first, in many ages it could not be brought with any constancy to submit unto the authority of God, in obedience unto his ordinances and institutions, as the whole story of the Old Testament doth declare: and now, when the time was come wherein they were all to cease, under a pretence of adhering to the authority of God, they rebelled against his wisdom, and refused to consider the instructions which he had inlaid from first to last concerning their ceasing and alteration; whereon the generality of the church fell and utterly perished. This, therefore, the apostle designs here to enlighten them in.

And this should teach us with what diligence, with what reverence, with what subjection of soul and resignation of our understandings unto the will and wisdom of God, all divine revelations are to be inquired into. So dealt in this matter the holy men and prophets of old, 1 Pet. 1:10, 11. And as for want hereof the whole church of the Jews perished at this season, so in all ages sundry particular persons did wofully miscarry. See Lev. 10:1–3; 2 Sam. 6:6, 7. And the want hereof is the bane of most churches in the world at this day.

In order unto the end mentioned, the apostle in the first place declares, that antecedently unto the giving of the law, and the institution of the Levitical priesthood thereby, God had, without any respect thereunto, given a typical prefiguration of this priesthood of Christ, in one who was on all accounts superior unto the Levitical priests, when they were afterwards introduced. This sacred truth, which had been hid for so many ages in the church, and which undeniably manifests the certain future introduction of another and a better priesthood, is here brought to light, and improved by the apostle. As "life and immortality," so all spiritual truth was "brought to light by the gospel," 2 Tim. 1:10. Truth was stored up in the prophecies, promises, and institutions of the Old Testament; but so stored up as that it was in a great measure hidden also; but was brought forth to light, and made manifest in the Gospel. For whereas it is said, that the great mystery of the manifold wisdom of God was hidden in him from the beginning of the world, Eph. 3:9, 10, the meaning is not, that it was so hid in the will and purpose of God as that he had made no intimation of it; for he had done so variously from the foundation of the world, or the giving of the first promise: but he had so laid it up and stored it in his sacred revelation, as that it was much hid from the understanding of the best of men in all ages, until it was displayed and brought forth to light by the Gospel, Ps. 49:4, 78:2. And all that glorious evidence of the grace of God which now appears unto us in the writings of the Old Testament, is from a reflection of light upon them from the New Testament, or the revelation of God by Jesus Christ. And therefore the whole church of the Jews, although they were in the entire possession of those writings of the Old Testament for so many ages, never understood so much of the mystery of the will and grace of God declared in them as every ordinary believer under the Gospel is enabled to do. And if we have the privilege and advantage of those oracles of God which were committed to them, incomparably above what they attained unto, certainly greater measures of holiness, and greater fruitfulness in obedience, are expected from us than from them. These things, the instance here insisted on by our apostle will manifest.

He in whom this prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ was made, is Melchisedec; concerning whom and his priesthood an account is given in the first part of the chapter, unto verse 10. And the description given of him consisteth of two parts: 1. The proposition of his story, or what is recorded concerning him, verses 1–3; 2. The application of it unto the present purpose and design of the apostle, verses 4–10. And this closeth the first general part of the chapter.

The second part of it, from verse 11 unto verse 24, consisted in a double inference, with their improvements taken from that discourse, as respecting Christ in his office.

1. Unto the removal, abolition, or taking away out of the church, the whole Aaronical priesthood, with all the worship of the tabernacle and temple, which depended thereon. This he evidently proves to ensue from the respect that was had unto the Lord Christ in the priesthood of Melchisedec, whereof he had given an account. Hereunto do all arguings belong, verses 11–17.

2. Unto the excellency of the priesthood of Christ in itself above that of the tabernacle, even during its continuance; which follows no less evidently from what he had proved before, verses 18–24.

3. Having laid this foundation in his demonstration of the necessary removal of the Aaronical priesthood, and the pre-eminence of that of Christ above it, even whilst it did continue, he further declares the nature of it from the dignity and qualifications of his person, with the manner of the discharge of his office on this account verses 24–28. For the design of the apostle in this epistle, especially in this chapter and the three that ensue, is to open unto us or turn aside a double veil; the one here below, the other above. That below is the veil that was on all the ordinances, institutions, ceremonies, and types of the law. This is the veil that is unto this day upon the Jews, that they "cannot see unto the end of the things that were to be done away." This he removes by giving a clear and full account of the mind of God in them, of their use and signification. The other above is the veil of the heavenly sanctuary. This he opens unto us in a declaration of the ministry of Christ our high priest therein, as we shall see. And under these heads, as the apostle plainly convinceth the Hebrews of the ceasing of their priesthood and worship, and that unto the unspeakable advantage of the church; so to us he doth unfold the principal design and end of all the Mosaical types of the Old Testament, with the institution of God in them.

This may suffice as a plain view and prospect of the general scope of the apostle in these discourses. The especial coherence of one thing with another, the nature of his instances, the accuracy and force of his arguings, the perspicuity of his deductions, with the like concernments of the argument in hand, shall be observed and spoken unto as they particularly occur in our progress.

Hebrews 7: 1–3

Οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Μελχισεδὲκ, βασιλεὺς Σαλὴμ, ἱερεὺς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, ὁ συναντήσας Ἀβραὰμ ὑποστρέφοντι ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆς τῶν βασιλέων, καὶ εὐλογήσας αὐτόν ᾧ καὶ δεκάτην ἀπὸ πάντων ἐμέρισεν Ἀβραὰμ, πρῶτον μὲν ἑρμηνευόμενος βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης, ἔπειτα δὲ, καὶ βασιλεὺς Σαλὴμ, ὅ ἐστι βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης· ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν, μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ Υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

There is little variety in the translation of these verses. Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου. Vulg. Lat., "Dei summi," for "altissimi;" "the most high God." Ἀπὸ πάντων. Syr., מִן כֹּל, "of all:" but adds, in a new way of exposition, מָדֵם דְּאִית הֲוָא עִמֵּהּ, "every thing that was with him;" that is, "of the spoils," as it is afterwards expounded. Ἐμέρισε. Vulg. Lat., "divisit;" properly Syr., פְּרַשׁ, "separated," laid aside. Bez., "impartitus est;" "imparted," "gave." Ἀγενεαλόγητος. Vulg. Lat., "sine genealogiâ." Bez., "sine genere," "without stock;" "sine serie generis," "without pedigree." The Syriac gives us an exposition of this passage: "Whose father and mother are not written in the generations" (or "genealogies,") "neither the beginning of his days nor the end of his life;" which manifests how ancient this exposition of these words was in the church. Μένει ἱερεύς. Syr., מְקַרְיָא כְּהֻנָּרוּתֵהּ, "his priesthood remaineth."

Ver. 1–3.—For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham divided out a tenth part of all; first, being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace; without father, without mother, without pedigree, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

The words are an entire proposition, consisting of a subject and a predicate, or what is affirmed of it. Unto the subject spoken of, which is "Melchisedec," there is adjoined a large description, by its properties and adjuncts in sundry particulars. That which is affirmed of him as so described, which is the predicate of the proposition, is contained in the last words, or the close of the third verse, "But being made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest for ever."

The introduction of the whole discourse, and therein its connection unto what went before, is contained in the causal particle γάρ, "for." And this may respect the reason why the apostle affirmed, and insisted so much on it, that the

Lord Christ was "a priest after the order of Melchisedec:" 'For both the truth,' saith he, 'of my assertion and the necessity of insisting thereon will be sufficiently manifest, if you will but consider who this Melchisedec was, how he is represented in the Scripture, and what is affirmed of him.' Or respect may be had in this word unto the whole preceding discourse, from chap. 5:11. There he lays the foundation of it, affirming that he had many things to say of this Melchisedec, and those such as they could not easily understand, unless they diligently applied their minds unto the knowledge of divine mysteries; hereof he now designs to give them an account: "For this Melchisedec," etc. But the connection is most natural unto the words immediately preceding; and a reason is given of what was affirmed in them, namely, that "Jesus was made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," chap. 6:20: 'For it was thus with this Melchisedec.'

Obs. I. When truths in themselves mysterious, and of great importance unto the church, are asserted or declared, it is very necessary that clear evidence and demonstration be given unto them; that the minds of men be left neither in the dark about their meaning, nor in suspense about their truth.—So dealeth our apostle in the large ensuing confirmation which he establisheth his foregoing assertion withal.

Οὗτος. The mention of Melchisedec is introduced with the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος, "this." It always hath an emphasis, and denotes somewhat eminent in the subject spoken of, mostly in a way of commendation: so verse 4, Θεωρεῖτε πηλίκος οὗτος,—"Consider how great a man this was;" 'this man of whom is our discourse.'

The person spoken of is variously described:—1. By his name; "Melchisedec." 2. By his original office; he was "a king." 3. The place of his rule or dominion, which was Salem; "king of Salem." 4. By another office added to the former, which principally belongs unto the design of the apostle: which is described, (1.) By the nature of it, the priesthood; a "priest:" (2.) By its object and author; "of the most high God." 5. By his actings as a priest; "he blessed Abraham:" illustrated, (1.) By the manner of it; "he met him:" (2.) By the time of it, and its circumstances; when "he returned from the slaughter of the kings." 6. By the acknowledgment of his office made by Abraham; "he divided unto him the tenth part of all." 7. By the interpretation of his name; the "king of righteousness:" 8. Of the place of his reign; "king of peace." 9. By sundry properties of his person, gathered out of the relation of his history in the Scripture; "without father, without mother, without pedigree, without

beginning of days or end of life." These descriptions in all these particulars being given of him, there are two things affirmed concerning him: 1. That "he was made like unto the Son of God;" 2. That "he abideth a priest continually:" all which things must be spoken unto.

First, For the person spoken of, and described by his name, Melchisedec, I shall in this place say no more of him but what is necessary for the understanding of the text; for I shall not here examine those opinions and disputes concerning him which for the most part have been raised by needless curiosity. The fond and impious imagination of them who would have him, some of them, to be the Holy Ghost, and some of them God, even the Father himself, have been long since exploded. That he was an angel in human appearance, is so contrary to the design of the apostle, that not many have given countenance to that opinion.

But that he was the Son of God himself, in a prelibation of his incarnation, taking upon him the form of a man, as he did afterwards the internal form and being in the personal union, some learned men have conjectured and contended. Howbeit, this also is directly contrary to the text, wherein he is said to be "made like unto the Son of God." And indeed all such opinions as make him more than man are wholly inconsistent with the design of the apostle; which is to prove, that even among men there was a priest and priesthood, representative of Christ and his priesthood, superior to that of the law; which hath nothing of argument in it if he were more than a man. Besides, he lays it down for a certain principle, that "every high priest is taken from among men," Heb. 5:1; and therefore, if Melchisedec were a high priest, he was so also.

Among those who grant him a mere man, very many, following the opinion of the Jews, contend he was Shem, the son of Noah; who was certainly then alive, and of great authority in the world by virtue of his primogeniture. But this also riseth up in contradiction unto our apostle, beyond all possibility of reconciliation. The Jews, who are no further concerned in him but as to what is declared by Moses, may safely, as to their own principles, though not truly, conjecture him to be Shem; but whereas our apostle affirms that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," we are not allowed to interpret these things of him concerning whom most of them are expressly recorded. Nor will it suffice to say that these things indeed are written of him under the name of Shem, but not under the name of Melchisedec; for this were to make the apostle to lay the weight of so important an argument as that in hand, and from whence he infers the removal

of all the ancient legal institutions out of the church, upon a nicety, and to catch as it were at an advantage for it. Besides, let him be called as he will, it is his person in the discharge of his office which the apostle speaks of; and the things affirmed of him are not true concerning, or not truly applicable unto Shem. And we may observe by the way, what a blessed effect it is of the care and wisdom of God towards the church, that there are so few things in the Scripture that seem to administer occasion unto the curiosities and conjectures of men; and of those not any of them needful unto our faith and obedience, so as that they should receive the least prejudice by our ignorance of the precise sense of those places. The whole is filled with such depths of wisdom and truth, as require our humble, diligent, reverent, careful search into them, all the days of our lives. But particular passages, historical or mystical, such as seem to leave room for variety of conjectures, are very few. Had they been multiplied, especially in matters of any importance, it could not have been avoided but that religion would have been filled with fruitless notions and speculations. And thus it hath fallen out in this matter of Melchisedec; which being veiled or hidden in the Old Testament, and that on purpose that we should know no more of him nor any of his concerns but what is expressly written, all ages have been fruitlessly exercised, yea pestered, with such curious inquiries about him as rise up in direct opposition unto the scope of the Holy Ghost in the account given concerning him.

These things, therefore, are certain, and belong unto faith in this matter: First, That he was a mere man, and no more but so; for, 1. "Every high priest" was to be "taken from among men," Heb. 5:1;—so that the Son of God himself could not have been a priest had he not assumed our nature: 2. That if he were more than a man, there were no mystery in it that he is introduced in the Scripture "without father, without mother, without pedigree," for none but men have so: 3. Without this conception of him there is no force in the apostle's argument against the Jews. Secondly, That he came not to his office by the right of primogeniture (which includes a genealogy) or any other successive way, but was raised up and immediately called of God thereunto; for in that respect Christ is said to be a priest after his order. Thirdly, That he had no successor on the earth, nor could have; for there was no law to constitute an order of succession, and he was a priest only after an extraordinary call. These things belong unto faith in this matter, and no more.

Two things every way consistent with the scope and purpose of the apostle, yea, eminently subservient thereunto, I shall take leave to add; the one as my judgment, the other as a probable conjecture only. And the first is, that although he lived and dwelt in Canaan, then and afterwards principally possessed by the posterity of the son of Ham, so called, yet he was none of the seven nations or peoples therein that were in the curse of Noah devoted unto bondage and destruction. For whereas they were therein, by a spirit of prophecy, anathematized and cast out of the church, as also devoted unto destruction, God would not raise up among them, that is, of their accursed seed, the most glorious ministry that ever was in the world, with respect unto typical signification; which was all that could be in the world until the Son of God came in his own person. This I take to be true, and do somewhat wonder that no expositors did ever take any notice of it, seeing it is necessary to be granted from the analogy of sacred truth.

My conjecture is, that he was a person of the posterity of Japheth, who was principally to be regarded as the father of the Gentiles that were to be called. Noah had prophesied that God should "enlarge the heart of Japheth," or "persuade him," so as that he should return to "dwell in the tents of Shem," Gen 9:27. Unto Shem he had before granted the present blessing of the covenant, in these words, "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem," verse 26; and thereby the bringing forth of the promised Seed was confined unto his posterity. Hereon among them was the church of God to be continued, and upon the matter confined, until the Shiloh came, unto whom the gathering of the Gentiles was to be, in the enlargement of Japheth, and his return to dwell in the tents of Shem. And whereas the land of Canaan was designed of God for the seat of the church in his posterity, he suffered it to be possessed first by the seed of cursed Canaan, that in their dispossessing and destruction he might give a representation and security of the victory and final success of the Lord Christ and his church over all their adversaries. Before this came to pass, God, as I suppose, brought this Melchisedec and some others of the posterity of Japheth into the land of Canaan, in pursuit of the promise made unto Shem, even before Abraham himself had possession of it, and placed him there in a condition of office superior unto Abraham himself. And this might be done for two ends: 1. That a claim might be put in on the behalf of Japheth unto an interest in the tents of Shem in the type of the privilege, for a while confined unto his family. This right and rule of Melchisedec in those places, which were to be the seat of the church enjoying the promise made to Shem, took, as it

were, livery and seisin for the Gentile posterity of Japheth, which was in due time to be brought into the full possession of all the rights and privileges of it. 2. That he might manifest that the state of Gentile converts, in the promise and spiritual privileges of the church, should be far more excellent and better than were the state and privileges of the posterity of Shem whilst in their separate condition; "God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." But these things are submitted to the judgment of every candid reader.

I shall only add what is certain and indubitable, namely, that we have herein a signal instance of the sovereignty and wisdom of God. All the world was at that time generally fallen into idolatry and false worship. The progenitors of Abraham, though a principal branch of the posterity of Shem (as it is like, in the line of primogeniture), "dwelt on the other side of the flood, and served other gods," Josh. 24:2. Probably Abraham himself was not free from the guilt of that apostasy before his call. Canaan was inhabited by the Amorites with the rest of the devoted nations on the one hand, and the Sodomites on the other. In the midst of these sinners above others was this man raised up, the great type of Christ, with all the illustrious qualifications to be afterwards declared. And we may learn,—

Obs. II. That God can raise the greatest light in the midst of the greatest darkness, as Matt 4:16.

Obs. III. He can raise up instruments for his service and unto his glory, when, where, and how he pleaseth.

Obs. IV. This signal prefiguration of Christ to the nations of the world, at the same time when Abraham received the promise for himself and his posterity, gave a pledge and assurance of the certain future call of the Gentiles unto an interest in him and participation of him.

Βασιλιύς. Secondly, This is the person spoken of; and the first thing in the description of him is his office, that he was "a king." So he is reported in the first mention of him, Gen. 14:18, "Melchizedek king of Salem." Now, whereas this doth not belong unto that wherein he was principally to be a type of Christ, nor is the Lord Christ anywhere said to be a king after the order of Melchisedec, nor doth the apostle make any use of the consideration of this office in him, we may inquire wherefore God placed him in that state and condition. And there seem to have been two ends thereof:—

1. To make his typical ministry the more eminent and conspicuous. For, placing him in the condition of regal power and authority, what he was and did would necessarily be more conspicuous and more regarded than if he had been only a private man. And moreover, by those possessions and wealth which he had as a king, he was enabled unto the solemn and costly discharge of his office of priesthood in sacrifices and other solemnities. God therefore made him a king, that he might be known and observed as he was a priest, and be able to bear the burden of that office. And these things were then not only consistent, but some preparation seems to be made for the conjunction of these offices by the privilege and rights of primogeniture; whereof I have discoursed elsewhere. Now although nothing can be concluded from hence concerning the preeminence of the priestly office among men above the regal,—which the Romanists plead for, from mere vain and empty pretences,—yet it doth follow, that the greatest temporal dignities and enjoyments ought to be subservient unto spiritual things, and the concerns of Christ.

2. Although he was not in his kingly office directly typical of Christ, yet by being a king he was the more meet to represent him as a priest, seeing he was to be the only king and priest of the church also. And it may be observed, that although Moses in Genesis makes mention of the acts of both his offices, yet our apostle takes notice of those of one sort only. For Moses informs us in the first place, that, when he went to meet Abraham, "he brought forth bread and wine;" that is, for the refreshment of him and his army. Now this was an act of regal power and munificence. This the apostle takes no notice of, but only of his receiving tithes, and blessing Abraham; which were both of them acts of sacerdotal power. Wherefore, although it was convenient he should be a king, yet as a king, and in what he did as a king, he was no type of Christ, though there might be a moral resemblance between them. For as Melchisedec refreshed Abraham, the father of the faithful, and his army, when they were weary after their conflict with their enemies, and in the discharge of their duty; so doth the Lord Christ, as king of his church, take care to support, relieve, and refresh all the children of Abraham, all believers, in all their duties, and in the whole course of obedience. So hath the wisdom of God disposed of things in the Scripture unto a fitness to give instruction, even beyond what they are firstly and principally designed unto. And although this and the like considerations should give no countenance unto men's curiosity in the exposition and application of any passages in the Scripture beyond the severest rules of

interpretation, yet may it encourage us unto a diligent search into them, whilst we are duly steered by the analogy of faith. And I see no reason why we may not hence collect these two things:—

Obs. V. The Lord Christ, as king of the church, is plentifully stored with all spiritual provisions for the relief, supportment, and refreshment, of all believers, in and under their duties; and will give it out unto them as their occasions do require.—For as Melchisedec represented the Lord Christ in what he did, so Abraham, in his battle and victory, was a type of all believers in their warfare and conflict with all their spiritual adversaries. Wherefore, as he and all his were refreshed by the kingly bounty of Melchisedec, so shall they be from the munificence and unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.

Obs. VI. Those who go to Christ merely on the account of his priestly office and the benefits thereof, shall also receive the blessings of his kingly power, in abundant supplies of mercy and grace.—Abraham designed nothing with Melchisedec but the owning of his sacerdotal office, in giving him the tithes of all, and receiving his blessing; but when he met him he was refreshed also with his kingly bounty. Many poor sinners go unto Christ principally, if not only, at the first, upon the account of his sacerdotal office, to have an interest in his sacrifice and oblation, to be made partakers of the mercy and pardon procured thereby; but when they come to him in a way of believing, they find that he is a king also, ready, able, powerful to relieve them, and unto whom they owe all holy obedience. And this answers the experience of many, it may be the most of them that do believe.

Σαλήμ. Thirdly, This kingly office of Melchisedec is further asserted by the specification of the place where he was king and reigned; he was "king of Salem." There hath been great inquiry about, and much uncertainty there is concerning, this place or city. Two opinions, all sorts of those who have inquired into these things with any sobriety, do incline unto;—for as for one who hath not long since affirmed, that this Salem is "Jerusalem that is above, the mother of us all," he hath thought meet to give other instances also how little he understands the things he undertakes to treat about. But some think it was that city, and no other, which was afterwards called Jerusalem, and became in David's time, and so for a long continuance, the principal seat of the church and solemn worship of God. This place, they say, was first called Salem, and afterwards,—it may be presently after the reign of this Melchisedec, and on the occasion thereof,—by the addition of יִרְאֶה or יִרְאוּ, "a vision," or, "they shall see

peace," called Jerusalem. Others think that Salem was a city or town not far from Sychem, which was afterwards destroyed; and there are reasons for both opinions.

Of this latter opinion Jerome is the principal author and maintainer, in his epistle to Evagrius. And there are three reasons for it, whereon he much insists: 1. That there was a city near Sychem that was called Salem, and no otherwise. And this is plainly affirmed in the Scripture, Gen. 33:18, "And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan." For those who render the words, וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם, "Et venit Jacob pacificus," (or, "incolumis,") "ad urbem Shechem," so making the word appellative, and not the name of a place, are undoubtedly mistaken; for the same place is mentioned again in the New Testament by the same name, John 3:23, "John was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim." For that Salim and Salem are the same Jerome well shows, with the reason of the variation. 2. He affirms, that at that time were seen at Sychem the ruins of the palace of Melchisedec, which manifested it to have been a magnificent structure. 3. It is pleaded that the circumstances of the story make it necessary to judge that it was this Salem. For Abraham was passing by the place where Melchisedec reigned, who thereon went out to meet him. Now, whereas he was returning from Hobah, which was on the left hand, or north side of Damascus, Gen. 14:15, Jerusalem was not in the way of his return, but Salem was.

On the other side, it is pleaded with more probability that Jerusalem was the seat of his kingdom. For, 1. It was anciently called Salem; which name is afterwards occasionally applied unto it, as that whereby it was known: Ps. 76:2, "In Salem is God's tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion," where Jerusalem only can be intended. Some think that afterwards, when it was possessed by the Jebusites, it began at first to be called Jebus-salem,—that is, Salem of the Jebusites; which by custom was transformed into Jerusalem. But the approved etymology, from יִרְאֶה and שָׁלֵם, so that the name should signify a "sight," or "vision of peace," is certainly true, and probably given by God himself. 2. In the days of Joshua, the king of Jerusalem was called Adonizedec; a name of the same signification with Melchisedec, which possibly from him was the name of the kings who afterwards reigned in that city. And that man, as it should seem, was in some reputation for righteousness among the Canaanites, whence he managed their common cause in their danger, Josh. 10:1–4. 3. Abraham dwelt at this time at Hebron, in the plain of Mamre; and, on his return from Hobah, or Damascus, the way lay near unto Jerusalem, as all charts yet declare; and Sychem

was more to the north than that he should conveniently pass that way. 4. Jerusalem being designed to be the place where the Lord Christ was to begin and exercise his priestly office, it may well be supposed that there this his illustrious type was to appear and be manifested; especially considering that it was to be the place where the seat of the church was to be fixed until the signification of the type was to be effected.

And these reasons do prevail with me to judge that Jerusalem was the place of the habitation and reign of Melchisedec. As for what is affirmed by Jerome concerning the ruins of his palace at Sychem, it is notoriously known how little credit such traditions do deserve. Besides, Josephus, who lived four hundred years before him, makes no mention of any such thing. And it is probable that the ruins which Jerome saw were those of the palace of Jeroboam, who there fixed the seat of the kingdom of Israel, 1 Kings 12:25, as king of the place where he obtained the crown, verse 1. But credulous and superstitious posterity chose to ascribe it unto the memorial of Melchisedec, rather than of him who being the bane and ruin of the nation, his memory was accursed. And to inquire how this city came afterwards into the hands of the Jebusites, is directly contrary to the design of the Holy Ghost, which was to hide from us the end of his life and offices, as our apostle declares. And herein also possession was taken of the seat of the church in the tents of Shem, on the behalf and in the name of the Japhethian Gentiles. And may we not observe, that,—

Obs. VII. God, in his sovereign pleasure, gives various intervals unto places, as to the enjoyment of his worship and ordinances.—This Jerusalem, which was at first ennobled by the priesthood of Melchisedec, was afterwards left for a long season unto the idolatrous Jebusites. In process of time it was visited again, and made the fixed station of all solemn divine worship, as it is now left unto salt and barrenness. So hath he dealt with many other places, and in particular, notwithstanding their boasting, with the city of Rome, some time a seat of the gospel, now the throne of antichrist. "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh," Jer. 7:12, 14, 26:6.

By the way, we must here give an account of somewhat that the apostle doth not say, as well as what he doth. After the mention of Melchisedec, and his being king of Salem, in the story, Gen. 14, it is added, that he met Abraham, "and brought forth bread and wine," verses 17, 18. Of his meeting Abraham the apostle takes notice; but of his bringing forth bread and wine, not at all. Hereof undoubtedly no reason can be given, but only that that particular action or passage belonged not at all unto his purpose. For he who takes notice of all

other circumstances, arguing as well from what was not said of him as from what was, would not have omitted any thing which is so expressly affirmed as this is, had it any way belonged unto his purpose. But the importunity of the Papists, who, with a strange kind of confidence, do hence seek countenance unto their missatical sacrifice, makes it necessary that we should inquire a little further into it.

Melchisedec, they tell us, as a priest and type of Christ, did offer this bread and wine in sacrifice to God. Herein, they add, alone was he typical of Christ, who offered himself unto God under the appearance of bread and wine. And he also instituted the sacrifice of the mass, wherein he should be so offered continually unto the end of the world. And on that account alone, they say, he continueth a priest for ever. For if he had not appointed priests here in his room, to offer him unto God, that office of his would have ceased, as Bellarmine disputes at large.

It were easy to make naked the fondness of these imaginations, would our present design permit. Some few things may be remarked on their assertions; as, 1. The apostle, in this whole discourse wherein Melchisedec is introduced and concerned, treateth not at all of the sacrifice of Christ, nor intimates any resemblance between the offering of Melchisedec and that of Christ; but it is the office alone and its dignity which he insists upon, designing to treat afterwards at large about his sacrifice,—and when he doth so, he doth not in the least compare it with the sacrifice of Melchisedec, but with those of Aaron according to the law,—so that there was no occasion for him to mention any sacrifice of Melchisedec's, should any such thing be supposed in the text of Moses. 2. A supposition of such a sacrifice of bread and wine as that pleaded for is contrary to the apostle's design, and destructive of it; for whereas he endeavoureth to prove that the priesthood of Melchisedec was far more excellent than that of Levi, he could not do it by this, that he offered bread and wine in sacrifice, for so also did the Levitical priests, Lev. 7:13, 23:13, 18. But all the excellencies which the apostle insisteth on consist in the dignity of his office and the qualifications of his person, not in the matter of his sacrifice. 3. Let all be granted they can desire, yet are they not advantaged as unto their especial end thereby; for what is the offering of real bread and wine, and no more, unto the offering of the body and soul of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of them? 4. As unto what they contend, that the Lord Jesus Christ would not be a priest for ever unless he had those priests on earth who continue to offer him in the sacrifice of the mass, it is so far from truth, as that the contrary is irrefragably

true and certain; for if he indeed hath need of other priests to carry on his office, he doth not continue the administration of it himself, or all the apostle's arguings against the perpetuity of the Aaronical priesthood are invalid. But because I am not willing to engage in any thing controversial beyond what is absolutely necessary, I shall only tender some considerations evidencing that no such thing as a sacrifice can be included in that expression, "He brought forth bread and wine;" and so proceed:—

1. The process of the story directs unto another sense of the words. Abraham was now returned with his forces unto "the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale," Gen. 14:17; a place not far from Jerusalem, called, as it is likely, the king's dale from Melchisedec, unto whom it belonged; where afterwards Absalom built a a pillar, for the memorial of his name, 2 Sam. 18:18. Here, probably, he continued for a while, as to refresh his own people, so to stay for the coming of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. For, upon their defeat in the battle, they had left the plain and fled unto the mountains, Gen. 14:10, giving up the cities with all their spoil unto the conquerors; but now, hearing of the success of Abraham, and his recovery of the captives with their goods, they resort unto him for relief. He who intended to restore all unto them, stayed for them, as it is probable, some days in the king's dale. Now, it was the manner in those countries, when any forces were on an expedition, that those in their way who were at peace with them did bring forth supplies of bread and wine, or water, for their refreshment. For the neglect of this duty, wherein they brake the laws of friendship and hospitality, did Gideon so severely punish the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel, Judges 8:5–9, 13–17. And the observance of this duty is recorded unto the commendation of Barzillai the Gileadite, who sent refreshment unto David and his army; for he said, "The people are hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness," 2 Sam. 17:27–29. In this state of things, Melchisedec, being the neighbour, friend, and confederate of Abraham, when he came with his army and abode so near unto him, brought forth bread and wine for their refreshment; which being a mere civil action, our apostle takes no notice of it. And they who can discover a sacrifice in this expression, have either more skill in the opening of mysteries than he had, or a better invention in coining groundless fables and imaginations of their own.

2. This act of Melchisedec is immediately subjoined unto the mention of him as king, being an instance of kingly power and munificence: "Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine." After this it is added, "And he was the priest of the most high God;" which is a plain introduction of and

preparation for the expression of his exercise of that office in his blessing of Abraham, which ensues in the next words. The Romanists contend that vau in וְהוּא כֹהֵן, is redditive, giving a reason of what was before affirmed: ' "He brought forth bread and wine," because he was "the priest of the most high God." ' But as this offers force to the universal usage of that particle, which is connexive only, so it will not serve their occasion. For they would have it that Melchisedec only offered this sacrifice of bread and wine; whereas if the reason why he did so was because he was the priest of the most high God, then every one who was so was in like manner to offer the same sacrifice. And whereas they place the whole especial nature of the Melchisedecian priesthood in this his sacrifice, if this were common to him with all others, then was he not a priest of a particular order; and so the whole discourse of the apostle is vain and impertinent. But it is plain, that he having nothing to do with nor inference to make from his royal office or acts, doth therefore omit this, which evidently was an act of kingly bounty.

3. The word here used, הוֹצִיא, he "brought forth," or caused to be brought forth, "bread and wine," is no sacred word, nor is ever used in the Scripture to express the sacred action of oblation or offering in sacrifice; it is always a common action that is denoted thereby.

4. The apostle's silence in this matter casteth this pretence out of all consideration. His design was to evince the excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of Levi, from this particular consideration, that he was "a priest after the order of Melchisedec." To prove that he was so indeed, and withal to show how great and excellent a person this Melchisedec was, who bare that office as a type of Christ in his, and also in how many things the resemblance between the Lord Christ and him did consist, wherein he was "made like unto the Son of God," he proposeth unto consideration every minute circumstance of all that was spoken of him, and what also in common use ought to be spoken of him, but being not so, was certainly omitted for some special reason and signification; insisting on some things which no man could have conjectured to have been designedly significant, if the Holy Ghost himself had not made the discovery thereof; omitting nothing that might confirm the truth or illustrate the evidence of his argument; yet he wholly passeth by this passage, without the least notice of it. Herein, if the Romanists may be believed, in this accurate collection of all things he omits nothing but only that wherein the essence and substance of his cause and plea did wholly consist. For this his offering of bread and wine in sacrifice, they say, was that thing alone wherein he was peculiarly the type of Christ; and they dispute with great vehemency that the resemblance

between them consisted herein alone, although the apostle doth instance expressly in sundry other things, as we shall see more afterwards, and makes no mention of this at all. It is therefore clear as the day-light, that he and they are diversely minded in this matter. But if they are in the right, certainly never any man managed an argument unto less advantage than the apostle doth that in this place, wherein yet there is an appearance of so great accuracy and care. For they do suppose that he scrupulously collects all the circumstances belonging unto the matter he treats of, and some of them of a difficult application unto his purpose, and at the same time omits that wherein the whole force of his argument did consist; which is a failure not modestly to be ascribed unto any person of sobriety or judgment. Wherefore we need not further trouble ourselves with those forced and futilous pretences. The reason why the apostle mentions Melchisedec as king of Salem, is to intimate his first prerogative above the Aaronical priests, in that he was a king. And we may observe that,—

Obs. VIII. Acts of munificence and bounty are memorable and praiseworthy, though they no way belong unto things sacred by virtue of divine institution.—So was this bringing forth of bread and wine by Melchisedec, to refresh Abraham and his people, though there was nothing of sacrifice therein. In former ages, either men were more inclined to such acts than now they are, or there were more efficacious means of engaging them thereunto than are judged meet now to be made use of, because perhaps discovered to have something of deceit in them. But this went along with all their bounty, that if they would make the acts of it sacred and religious, all should be peculiarly devoted and dedicated unto God; wherein, although their pious intentions are to be commended, yet it may justly be feared that they missed of their aim, in making things and services sacred which God had not made so. But such acts as those we speak of, towards men, need no more of religion in them, but that they be done in obedience to the will of God, who requires of us to do good to all, and to exercise loving-kindness in the earth. They are so good and praiseworthy, provided, 1. They are of real use, and not in things that serve only for ostentation and show; 2. That they interfere with no other especial duty, nor cause an omission of what is necessary, etc. Again,—

Obs. IX. It is acceptable with God, that those who have laboured in any work or service of his should receive refreshments and encouragements from men.—For as such an acceptable service is the relief given to Abraham and his people by Melchisedec celebrated. God is himself a sufficient reward unto his people in and

for all their services; he needs not call in the help of men to give them a recompence: however, it is well-pleasing unto him, that he, or his work which they do, in any thing, be owned by men.

Ιερεύς. Fourthly, The apostle proceeds with his description of the subject of his proposition, with respect unto that office which he principally regards: Ἱερεὺς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου,—"priest of the most high God." Two things are here asserted: 1. That in general he was a "priest." 2. The limitation of that office with respect unto the author and object of it is expressed; he was a "priest of the most high God."

1. He was a priest, and he was the first that was so by especial institution. How the rite of sacrificing was common to all worshippers of old, and what was the peculiar interest of the first-born therein, I have at large before declared. I have also proved that Melchisedec was the first who was authoritatively separated unto this office by God's approbation. And as it was a new, so it was a great and remarkable thing in the world. For although we know not how far it was received or understood by the men of that age, who I believe were not stupidly ignorant and carnal, as some would have them to be; yet certain it is, that the institution of this office, and the representation of it in the person of Melchisedec, gave great light and instruction into the nature of the first promise, and the work of the blessing Seed which was to be exhibited. For the faith of the church in all ages was so directed, as to believe that God had respect unto Christ and his work in all his institutions of worship. Wherefore the erection of the office of a priesthood to offer sacrifice, and that in the person of so great a man as Melchisedec, must needs lead them into an acquaintance with the nature of his work in some measure, both he and it being so conspicuously represented unto them.

In this general assertion, that he was a priest, two things are included: (1.) That he was truly and really a man, and not an angel, or an appearance of the Son of God, prelusory unto his incarnation. For "every priest is taken from among men," Heb. 5:1,—of the same common nature with other men, and in the same state, until he be separated unto his office. And so was Melchisedec, a man called out from amongst men, or he was not a priest. (2.) That he had an extraordinary call unto his office; for he falleth likewise under that other rule of our apostle, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, unless he be called of God," Heb. 5:4. But of what nature this call was, and how he received it, cannot positively be determined in particular. Two things are certain concerning him negatively: [1.] That he came not to this office in the church by succession unto

any that went before him, as did all the Levitical priests after Aaron. There was none went before him in this office, as none succeeded unto him, as we shall see immediately. And when the Lord Christ is said to be "a priest after the order of Melchisedec," it doth not suppose that he was of any certain order, wherein were a series of priests succeeding one another, but only that it was with Christ as it was with him, in point of call and office. Wherefore his call was personal, in some act of God towards him, wherein himself and no other was concerned. [2.] He was not called or set apart unto his office by any outward unction, solemn consecration, or ceremonial investiture: for the Lord Jesus Christ had none of these, who was made a priest after the manner that he was; only there was an outward sign of his call unto all his offices, in the descending of the Holy Ghost on him in the form of a dove, Matt. 3, John 1. These things belonged purely unto the law and Aaronical priesthood, wherein spiritual things were to have a carnal representation. And those by whom they are received, in the separation of any unto an evangelical office, do prefer the ministration of the law before that of the gospel, as more glorious, because they discern not the glory of spiritual things. Besides, there was none in the world greater than he, nor nearer unto God, to confer this office upon him, as Aaron was consecrated by Moses. For in the authoritative collation of an office there is a blessing; and, "without controversy, he who blesseth is greater than he who is blessed by him," as we shall see immediately. And therefore would not God make use of any outward means in the call or the separation of the Lord Christ unto his offices, or any of them; because there was none in heaven or earth greater than he, or nearer unto God, to be employed therein. Angels and men might bear witness, as they did, unto what was done by the Lord God and his Spirit, Isa. 61:1; but they could confer nothing upon him. And therefore, in the collation of the ministerial office under the gospel, the authority of it resides only in Jesus Christ. Men can do no more but design the person according to his rules and laws; which may be done among equals. Wherefore the call of Melchisedec unto his office was extraordinary, and consisted in an extraordinary unction of the Spirit. And this had two things attending of it: [1.] That it gave unto himself sufficient security and warranty to undertake and execute the office whereunto he was called. So did every extraordinary call, accompanied with a divine afflatus and inspiration, Amos 7:14, 15. [2.] That it evidenced itself unto all that feared God; who thereon willingly submitted unto his administrations in the discharge of his office. And this is all that we can know, as to the way and manner of his becoming a priest. That he was not so by succession unto any other, by the right of primogeniture,

nor made so by men, are certain from the apostle's discourse. The time, place, season, and occasion of his call, are all hidden from us; but he was made priest by God himself. For,—

Obs. X. Every one is that in the church, and nothing else, which God is pleased to make him to be.—Wherefore, for us to rest in God's vocation is our honour and our safety, as well as our duty. For,—

Obs. XI. Where God calleth any one unto a singular honour and office in his church, it is in him a mere act of his sovereign grace.—So he took this Melchisedec, who had nothing of stock, race, descent, or succession, to recommend him, but as one as it were newly sprung out of the earth, and raised him to the highest dignity that any man in those days was capable of. Let us not, therefore, repine or murmur at any of God's dealings with others, nor envy because of his gifts bestowed on them. May he not do what he will with his own, seeing he is greater than men, and giveth no account of his matters?

Obs. XII. A divine call is a sufficient warranty for the acting of them according unto it who are so called, and for the obedience of others unto them in their work or office.—By virtue hereof this Melchisedec arose in the midst of the nations of the world, took on him a now office and power, being owned and submitted unto therein by Abraham, and all that believed.

Obs. XIII. The first personal instituted type of Christ was a priest; this was Melchisedec.—There were before real instituted types of his work, as sacrifices; and there were moral types of his person, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things; but the first person who was solemnly designed to teach and represent him, by what he was and did, was a priest. And that which God taught herein was, that the foundation of all that the Lord Christ had to do in and for the church was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement and reconciliation for sin. Every thing else that he doth is built on the supposition hereof. And we must begin in the application where God begins in the exhibition. An interest in the effects of the priestly office of Christ is that which in the first place we ought to look after. This being attained, we shall be willing to be taught and ruled by him, and not else.

2. The apostle adds the limitation of this his office of priesthood, as to its author and especial object; and that is, "the most high God." For so by ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ὑψίστος, doth he render אֵל עֶלְיוֹן in Moses.

(1.) He was כֹּהֵן לְאֵל, a "priest to God," This determines the sense of the word "cohen" to the office of the priesthood; contrary to the pretensions of some modern Jews, and the Targum on Ps. 110. For whereas they cannot understand how the Messiah should be a priest, and perceive well enough the inconsistency of the legal priesthood with such a supposition, they would have the word "cohen" in the psalm to signify a "prince" or a "ruler." But although the word used absolutely may be applied sometimes to such a purpose, yet where God is proposed as its object, a "priest of God," or "unto God," none can be signified but one in the priestly office.

(2.) He was a priest "unto the most high God." This is the first time that this title is ascribed unto God in the Scripture, which afterwards is frequently repeated; and so also are others of the same importance, as "God above," "God over all," "The God of heaven," and absolutely, "The Most High." And it is either descriptive or distinctive, as all such attributes and epithets are:—

[1.] As it is descriptive, the majesty, power, and authority of God over all, are intended therein. "The most high God," is the glorious God, with whom is terrible majesty. To represent them, it is said that "his throne is high and lifted up," Isa. 6:1; and he is called "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," Isa. 57:15. Thus is he styled, to fill our hearts with a reverence of him, as one infinitely above us, and whose glorious majesty is absolutely inconceivable. So, when the Holy Ghost would express the glory of Christ as exalted, he says he is made "higher than the heavens," and he "is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." "The most high God," therefore, is first, God as inconceivably exalted in glory and majesty. Again, his power and authority are also intended herein. "The Most High ruleth over all," Dan. 4:17. God over all in power and authority, disposing of all things, is "the most high God." So Abraham explains this name, Gen. 14:22.

[2.] As it is distinctive it respects other gods, not in truth and reality, but in reputation. For so there were then "lords many, and gods many," in the world. So they were esteemed by them that made them, and worshipped them: λεγόμενοι θεοί, as our apostle speaks,—such as were "called gods," 1 Cor. 8:5, but "by nature were not gods," Gal. 4:8. They were all earthly; and though some of them had their being above, as the sun, moon, and host of heaven, yet they had all their deity from beneath; nor ever had it any existence but in the deluded imaginations of the sons of men. In opposition unto them, with distinction from them, God is called "the most high God." The world was at that time

fallen into all manner of idolatry. Every country, every city, every family almost, had made new gods unto themselves. The most general veneration, as I have elsewhere showed, was then given unto the sun, and that because he appeared to them on high, or the highest being they could apprehend. Hence had he the name of ἥλιος among the Greeks, from עֶלְיוֹן, "the high one." In opposition unto all these gods, and in renunciation of them, Melchisedec professed himself "the priest of the most high God;" as Paul preached at Athens "the unknown God," in opposition unto all their known σεβάσματα, or "idols," which they supposed themselves acquainted withal. And whereas God had not yet revealed himself by any especial name, as he did afterwards on sundry occasions (the first he made of that kind being El Shaddai, or "God Almighty," Gen. 17:1, as himself declares, Exod. 6:3), those that feared him made use of this title, as most comprehensive, as most suited unto their present faith and profession. So Abraham expounds this title, Gen. 14:22, "The most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth;" which he gives as a reason why he would not take aught of the king of Sodom,—seeing he was the servant of that God who disposed of all things in heaven and earth, and so had no need of supplies from him. His God could make him rich without the help of the king of Sodom. Wherefore God under this consideration, of "the most high God," was the principal object of the faith of believers in those days. For whereas they were few in number, and all the inhabitants of the earth were greedily set upon getting possessions and inheritances for themselves, they believed in God as him who was able to protect them and provide for them, according unto the tenor of the name whereby he afterwards revealed himself unto Abraham, namely, of El Shaddai, or "God Almighty." And this also was the principal part of their profession, that they served the most high God alone, in opposition unto all the false and dunghill deities of the earth.

The Socinians, in all their disputes against the deity of Christ, do always make use of this name, and continually repeat it. "Christ," they say, "is not the most high God." A god they will allow him to be, but not the most high God. But whereas this name is used in distinction only from all false gods, if their Christ be a god, but not on any account the most high God, he is a false god, and as such to be rejected. See Jer. 10:11. And from this name or title of God, as it is descriptive of his majesty and authority, we may observe,—

Obs. XIV. To keep up and preserve a due reverence of God in our minds and words, we should think of and use those holy titles which are given unto him, and whereby he is described in the Scripture.—This was the constant manner of

the holy men of old, and which God himself in sundry places directs unto. Thus Abraham immediately makes use of this name, Gen. 14:22, "I have lift up mine hand unto Jehovah, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." So are we taught to fear that glorious and dreadful name, "The LORD thy God," Deut. 28:58. See Isa. 30:15, 57:15. And there is nothing that argues a greater contempt of God among men, than the common, slight, irreverent mention of his name, whose highest degree is that horrible profanation of swearing and cursing by it, with wicked and diabolical spirits. Let us not therefore think of God, nor mention him, but as the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." Not that on all occasions of mentioning him we should constantly make use of these glorious titles, the Scripture warranting us to speak both to him and of him without their addition unto his name; but that we should do so as occasion doth require, and always sanctify him in our hearts and words, as him unto whom they do belong.

Obs. XV. It is good at all times to fix our faith on that in God which is meet to encourage our obedience and dependence upon him in our present circumstances.—The believers in those days did in a very particular manner confess themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. 11:13. The church was not as yet fixed unto any certain place, and they being separated from the apostate world, not mixing with it, nor incorporating in any society, went up and down from one place to another. In this condition, having no inheritance nor abiding place, but exposed unto manifold dangers, they eyed God in an especial manner as "the most high God;" as him that was over all, and had the disposal of all things in his own sovereign power. And that variety of titles which in the Scripture are given unto God, with the descriptions that are made of him, are all suited unto this end, that, in the variety of occasions and trials that may befall us in this world, we may still have something peculiarly suited unto the encouragement of our faith and dependence on God.

Obs. XVI. In particular, it is a matter of inestimable satisfaction that he whom we serve is "the most high God," the sovereign "possessor of heaven and earth."—It is in sense the same with that name which God gave himself when he entered into covenant with Abraham, encouraging him thereby unto an adherence to him in faith and obedience, Gen. 17:1, "I am God Almighty." And it were easy to demonstrate what relief, in all troubles, dangers, persecutions, distresses, inward and outward, in life and death, we may thence receive. As this name is distinctive we may observe, that,—

Obs. XVII. Public profession in all ages is to be suited and pointed against the opposition that is made unto the truth, or apostasy from it.—The world being now generally fallen into idolatry and the worship of new, earthly gods, believers made this the principal part of their profession, that they served the most high God; which ought to be observed on all alike occasions.

Fifthly, The apostle describes this Melchisedec from that action of his, with its circumstances, which gave occasion unto the whole account of him: "Who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings." On this occasion only is he introduced in the Scripture story, as a new person, never heard of before, nor ever afterwards to be made mention of, as unto any of his own concerns. Abraham did not only overthrow the whole army of the kings, and recover the spoils, but he slew the kings themselves, as is expressly affirmed, Gen. 14:17. Hence is he here said to "return from the slaughter of the kings:" for as he includeth in it the destruction of their host, so it was that which signalized his victory. And the ἀκροθίνια afterwards mentioned were the "opima spolia" taken from the kings themselves. As Abraham thus returned with honour and glory, made very great in the eyes of the nations round about, and as he staid in the king's dale to deliver unto the king of Sodom his goods and people, with a royal munificence, becoming a servant of the most high God, who had a better portion than could be found amongst the spoils, Melchisedec, knowing the state of things, and the promise made to Abraham, comes out unto him, for the ends mentioned.

But it may be inquired whether this were a just occasion for the introduction of this "king of peace, priest of the most high God," and type of Christ, to bless him who returned from war with the spoils of a bloody victory.

Ans. 1. The apostasy and rebellion of the whole world against God have made it necessary that spiritual victory be the foundation of all the actings of Christ, in the setting up of his kingdom. The first promise of him was, that he should "break the serpent's head," "wound the head over the large earth," Ps. 110:6. This was to be effected by a glorious conquest and victory, which is everywhere so described in the Scripture. See Col. 2:15. And because outward force and opposition is always used by the world in the defence of the interest of Satan, he will also sometimes apply the outward sword for the destruction of his stubborn adversaries, Isa. 63:1–3; Rev. 19. This, therefore, was no unmeet season for the introduction of him who made so solemn a representation of him.

2. Abraham himself was in this victory also a type of Christ; not absolutely of his person, as was Melchisedec, but of his power and presence in his church. Melchisedec, I say, represented Christ in his person and his offices; Abraham represented his presence in the church, or the church as his body. I will neither approve of nor reject that conjecture of some, that those four kings were types of the four great monarchs of the world which the church of God was to conflict withal, and at length to prevail against; as Dan. 7:17–27. And, indeed, many things in their names and titles do notably countenance that conjecture. But it is certain in general that they were great oppressors of the world, roving up and down for dominion and spoil. Wherefore Abraham's conquest of them was not only a pledge of the final success of the church in the world, but also a representation of the usefulness of the church unto the world, whenever its pride and blindness will admit of its help and kindness, Micah 5:7. The church is indeed the only means of conveying blessings unto the world, as the oppression thereof will prove its ruin.

3. The land of Canaan was now given unto Abraham and his seed for a possession, to be the seat of the church and God's worship among them. The nations now inhabiting it were devoted unto destruction in an appointed season. And he was not to allow these foreign kings to set up any dominion therein. And God gave him this victory as a pledge of his future possession.

4. Abraham was obliged, both in justice and affection, to rescue his brother, Lot, whom they were carrying away captive. And this is expressed as the next cause of his engagement against them, Gen. 14:14. On all accounts, therefore, this war was just, and the victory of God. And because there was a representation therein of the victory and success of Christ in his church, it was a season most eminently proper for the introduction of Melchisedec, blessing him in the exercise of sacerdotal power.

5. This congress of Melchisedec and Abraham, after Abraham had gotten the victory over all his adversaries, was a type and representation of the glorious congress and meeting of Christ and the church at the last day, when the whole church shall have finished its warfare, and be victorious over the world, sin, the law, death, and hell. Then will the Lord Christ bring out the stores of heaven for their eternal refreshment, and give them in the fulness of the blessing; and all things shall issue in the glory of the most high God. All the promises are "unto him that overcometh." And we may observe, that,—

Obs. XVIII. All the commotions and concussions that are among the nations of the world do lie in, or shall be brought into, a subserviency unto the interest of Christ and his church.—I intend those places where either the seat of the church is, or is to be. A great war and tumult there was between these eastern kings and those of Canaan, and many nations were smitten and destroyed in the expedition, Gen. 14:5–7. And what is the final issue whereinto all these things do come? Why, two things fell out hereon, that neither side of the combatants either looked for or had any interest in: 1. The victory of Abraham, or the church, over them all. 2. A glorious type and representation of Christ, brought forth visibly acting in his church. Yea, I may add, that in Abraham's glorious victory and royal munificence on the one hand, and in the sacerdotal blessing of Melchisedec on the other, there was such a representation of Christ, in his principal offices as priest and king, as had never been made in the world before. This issue did God direct that war and tumult unto. It will be no otherwise with all those confusions and disorders that the world is filled withal at this day, though we can see nothing of the ways and means of their tendency unto such an end.

Obs. XIX. There have been, and are to be, such seasons wherein God will dispose of nations and their interests according as the condition of the church doth require; as he did here with all these nations, Isa. 43:3, 4, 60:6, 7.

Obs. XX. The blessing of God may be expected on a just and lawful war.—This war and victory of Abraham, which he received the blessing upon, are celebrated, Isa. 41:2, 3. And our apostle mentions that circumstance of the slaughter of the kings as that which was a token of God's kindness unto Abraham, and of his own greatness. And where these things occur,—1. A lawful, necessary, immediate cause of war, as Abraham had for the rescue of Lot; 2. A lawful call unto the war, as Abraham had, being a sovereign prince, and raising his army of his own people merely, and that to the securing of the possessions of a country granted unto him by God himself; and, 3. A subserviency unto the glory of Christ and the good of the church; the presence of God in it, and the blessing of God upon it, may be justly expected.

Sixthly, Melchisedec is further described by two acts of his sacerdotal power or office, which he exercised on this occasion of meeting Abraham: 1. He blessed him; and then, 2. He received tithes of him:—

1. He met Abraham, and blessed him. This solemn benediction is fully expressed, Gen. 14:19, 20: "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." There are two parts of this blessing: (1.) That which hath Abraham for its object, a blessing of prayer; (2.) That which hath God for its object, a blessing of praise. Our apostle seems to take notice only of the first, or that part of the blessing whereof Abraham was the immediate object; but the truth is, the other part, whereby he blessed God, being on the account of Abraham, and as it were in his name, it belongs also to the blessing wherewith he was blessed.

As to this blessing, we may consider, [1.] The nature; [2.] The form of it. As to the nature of it, blessings in general are the means of communicating good things, according unto the power and interest in them of them that bless, Gen. 33:11. So also are curses of evil. Hence it is God alone that absolutely can either bless or curse; for he only hath sovereign power of all good and evil. He doth therefore so express his blessing,—"In blessing I will bless thee," Gen. 22:17; —'do it assuredly and effectually, as having all the subject-matter of blessings in my hand.' And therefore he says to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee," Gen. 12:3;—because he is over them and all their blessings and curses. Balak, therefore, was not a little mistaken when he tells Balaam, "I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed," Numb. 22:6; for however he might divine concerning them that should be so, absolutely he could neither bless nor curse. Wherefore I say, all blessings are instituted means of the conveyance and communication of good unto others, according unto the power and interest of them that bless in that good. This being amongst men, by God's concession and institution, various, there are also various sorts of blessings, which may be reduced unto two heads: 1st. Such as are authoritative; 2dly. Such as are charitative or merely euctical. The latter sort of blessing is removed from our consideration in this place, for our apostle treats only of such blessings as evidently and unavoidably prove him that blesseth to be superior unto him that is blessed, verse 7: but this is not so in this latter sort of blessings, which consist only in prayer for a blessing on them; for so equals may bless one another; yea, inferiors may bless superiors, children may bless parents, servants masters, subjects their rulers, Ps. 20:1–4.

Authoritative benediction among men is twofold: (1st.) Paternal; (2dly.) Sacerdotal, or with respect unto any other office in the church.

(1st.) Paternal benedictions were of old of two sorts: [1st.] Such as were of common right; [2dly.] Such as had an especial prophetical warranty.

[1st.] For the first; parents have an especial right, by virtue of divine institution, authoritatively to bless their children, inasmuch as he hath given unto them an especial interest in the matter of the blessing and power for the communication of it. And this blessing consists in two things: First, A solemn declaration unto God of their acceptance and approbation of that duty and obedience which their children perform unto them, by the law of nature and God's appointment. This ordinarily brings the children so blessed under the promise of the fifth commandment. So are the words of the command, לְמַעַן יַאֲרִכוּן יָמֶיךָ,—that "they may prolong thy days." 'They shall have power to communicate this good unto thee by their blessing, in their solemn declaration of their acceptance and approbation of thy obedience.' And if this were more considered and more observed by parents and children, it would be much to their advantage. And, indeed, the state of those children is unhappy, whose parents cannot sincerely avow an approbation of their duty; which intercepts the benefit of their blessings. Secondly, Parents bless their children by endeavouring to instate them in their own covenant-interest. God having promised to be a God unto believers, and to their seed in and by them, they do three ways bless them with the good things thereof: first, By communicating unto them the privilege of the initial seal of the covenant, as a sign, token, and pledge of their being blessed of the Lord; secondly, By pleading the promise of the covenant in their behalf; thirdly, By careful instructing of them in the mercies and duties of the covenant. Wherefore, although this power of blessing be founded in the law of nature, and in all nations something hath been observed that looks towards it, yet it is by faith alone, and in an interest in the covenant, that any parents are able to bless their children in a due manner. For a blessing is a communication of good according to his interest in it that blesseth, which we have none in any that is really so, but by virtue thereof. And whereas these things are a solemn appointment of God, it is certainly a disadvantage that a foppish ceremony is in common practice substituted in the room of them.

[2dly.] There was of old a paternal benediction that had its rise in an especial warranty, and was accompanied with a spirit of prophecy. This consisted in a certain prediction and declaration of future events, whereby those so blessed were infallibly and indispensably stated in a right unto them. So Noah blessed

Shem and Japheth; Isaac blessed Jacob; Jacob all his sons. Herein God gave unto some parents the honour of a power to bequeath unto their posterity those good things which he graciously intended to bestow on them. This kind of blessing is now absolutely ceased, for it wholly respected the coming of Christ in the flesh, with those other things which conduced thereunto.

It were well if, instead of all these several ways of blessing, many parents did not curse their children. Some upon their provocations have desperately and profanely imprecated curses upon them; and we have known instances wherein God hath eminently revenged their impiety, by his judgments inflicted on parents and children both. Some entail a curse upon them, by oppression and falsehood in getting their estates, or in a flagitious course of life; which God will revenge to the third generation. But most do curse them with the cursed example of their conversation, initiating them almost from the cradle in a course of sin and wickedness.

It is true, many of those parents who do use conscientiously the ways appointed of God whereby they may bless their children, do ofttimes not see the effect of their endeavours. They bless them, but they are not blessed. But, first, They have peace and comfort in the discharge of their duty; secondly, Their blessing may have success, and oftentimes hath, when they are gone out of the world, yea, in their children's children, for many generations; thirdly, If all fail, they shall be witnesses for God at the last day against their own profligate posterity. But I return.

(2dly.) Sacerdotal blessings were authoritative also, and that on a double ground: [1st.] Of common right and equity; and, [2dly.] Of especial institution.

[1st.] There was a common right and equity, that he who was called to be a priest should bless the people authoritatively. For as he was appointed to act for men with God, so it is reasonable that he should pronounce blessings unto them in the name of God; that as he ministerially carried their gifts, offerings, and services unto God, so in like manner he should return his acceptance and blessing unto them. Whereas, therefore, this right and duty belonged unto the office of the priest, two things ensue thereon; firstly, That this blessing was an act of authority, for every act of office is so; secondly, That he who thus blesseth another is greater than he who is blessed by him, as our apostle disputes, and as we shall see afterwards. And we may take notice, in our passage, that whatever be the interest, duty, and office of any, to act in the name of others towards God, in any sacred administrations, the same proportionably is their interest,

power, and duty to act towards them in the name of God in the blessing of them. And therefore ministers may authoritatively bless their congregations. It is true, they can do it only declaratively, but withal they do it authoritatively, because they do it by virtue of the authority committed unto them for that purpose. Wherefore the ministerial blessing is somewhat more than euctical, or a mere prayer. Neither is it merely doctrinal and declaratory, but that which is built on a particular especial warranty, proceeding from the nature of the ministerial office. But whereas it hath respect in all things unto other ministerial administrations, it is not to be used but with reference unto them, and that by them by whom at that season they are administered.

[2dly.] There was an especial institution of a sacerdotal benediction under the old testament, recorded, Num. 6:22–27: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee and keep thee: the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." Their putting the name of God upon the people, was their praying for and pronouncing blessings on them in his name, by virtue of this institution; for it is an institution whereby the name of God is put on any thing or person. Hereon God would effectually bless them. This especial institution, I acknowledge, was after the days of Melchisedec, and the cessation of his office as to actual administration; but it is apparent, and may be proved, that many, if not the most, of those sacred institutions which were given in one system unto Moses, were singly and gradually given out by inspiration and prophecy unto the church before the giving of the law, only at Sinai their number was increased, and the severity of their sanction heightened. Thus this sacerdotal benediction was but a transcript from and expressive of that power and form of blessing which Melchisedec as a priest enjoyed and used before.

And from what hath been spoken we may gather the nature of this blessing of Melchisedec wherewith he blessed Abraham. For, (1.) It had the nature of a blessing in general, whereby any one man may bless another, in that it was euctical and eucharistical;—it included both prayer for him and thanksgiving on his account unto God. (2.) It was authoritative and sacerdotal. He was "the priest of the most high God," and he "blessed Abraham;" that is, by virtue of his office. For so the nature of the office requireth, and so God had in particular appointed, that the priests should bless in his name. (3.) It was prophetical,

proceeding from an immediate inspiration, whereby he declares the confirmation of the great blessing promised unto Abraham; "Blessed be Abram." And we may see,—

Obs. XXI. That he who hath received the greatest mercies and privileges in this world may yet need their ministerial confirmation.—Abraham had before received the blessing from the mouth of God himself; and yet it was no doubt a great confirmation of his faith, to be now blessed again in the name of God by Melchisedec. And, indeed, such is the estate of all the faithful, the children of Abraham in this world, that, what through the weakness of their faith, what through the greatness of their temptations and trials, they stand in need of all ministerial renovations of the pledges of God's goodwill towards them. We are apt to think that if God should speak once unto us, as he did to Abraham, and assure us of the blessing, we should never need further confirmation whilst we live; but the truth is, he doth so speak unto all that believe, in the word, and yet we find how much we want the ministerial renovation of it unto us. Bless God for the ministry, for the word and sacraments; ordinarily our faith would not be kept up without them.

Obs. XXII. In the blessing of Abraham by Melchisedec, all believers are virtually blessed by Jesus Christ.—Melchisedec was a type of Christ, and represented him in what he was and did, as our apostle declares. And Abraham in all these things bare the person of, or represented all his posterity according to the faith. Therefore doth our apostle, in the foregoing chapter, entitle all believers unto the promises made unto him, and the inheritance of them. There is, therefore, more than a bare story in this matter. A blessing is in it conveyed unto all believers, in the way of an ordinance for ever.

Obs. XXIII. It is God's institution that makes all our administrations effectual.—So did sacerdotal benedictions become authoritative and efficacious. Innumerable ways and means of blessing things and persons have been found out in the Papacy. They will bless bells, steeples, churches, and church-yards, utensils, fonts, candles, salt, and children by confirmation. There is, in truth, in them all a want of that wisdom, gravity, and reverence, which ought to accompany men in all religious services; but that which renders them all useless, and casts them out of the verge of religion, is, that they want a divine institution.

Ὧι καὶ δεκάτην ἀπὸ πάντων ἐμέρισεν. 2. The second sacerdotal act, or exercise of priestly power ascribed unto Melchisedec, is that he received tithes of all: "To whom also Abraham gave the tenth of all." As Abraham gave them in a way of duty, so he received them in a way of office. So the apostle expresseth it, verse 6, "He received tithes of Abraham," or tithed him. And the word πάντων, "of all," is limited unto the spoils which he took from the enemies, verse 4, "To whom Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." This in the original history is so expressed as to leave it doubtful both to whom the tenths were given, and of what they were: Gen. 14:20, וַיִּתֶּן־לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר מִכֹּל,—"And he gave him the tenth of all." The words immediately preceding are the words of Melchisedec, and the story concerneth him; so that if the relative included in וַיִּתֶּן, "he gave," do answer unto the next antecedent, Melchisedec gave the tenth of all unto Abraham. Nor doth it appear what the כֹּל or "all" was that is intended; whether his own whole estate, or all the tithable things which he had then with him. But all this ambiguity is removed by our apostle, according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, and withal it is declared how great a mystery depended on the right understanding of those words. It was Abraham that gave the tenth of all to Melchisedec; whereby he acknowledged him to be the priest of the most high God, and the type of the Son of God as incarnate,—every way superior unto him, who had but newly received the promises. And the tenth which he gave was only of the spoils that he took from the enemies, as a token and pledge in particular that the victory and success which he had against the kings was from God.

This receiving of tithes by Melchisedec was a sacerdotal act. For, (1.) The tenth thus given was firstly given unto God; and he who received them, received them as God's officer, in his name. Where there was none in office so to receive them, they were immediately to be offered unto God in sacrifice, according unto their capacity. So Jacob vowed the tenth unto God, Gen. 28:22; which he was himself to offer, there being no other priest to receive it at his hand: and no doubt but he did it accordingly, when God minded him to pay his vow at Bethel, Gen. 35:1–6. And, (2.) The things that were fit of this sort were actually to be offered in sacrifice unto God. This Saul knew, when he made that his pretence of sparing and bringing away the fat cattle of the Amalekites, 1 Sam. 15:15. And I no way doubt but that these tenths that Abraham gave, at least such of them as were meet for that service, although it be not expressed, were offered in sacrifice unto God by Melchisedec. For whereas he was a king, he stood in no need of any contribution from Abraham; nor was it honourable to receive any

thing in way of compensation for his munificence in bringing forth bread and wine,—which were to sell his kindness and spoil his bounty; nor would Abraham have deprived the king of Sodom and others of any of their goods, to give them unto another. Wherefore he received them as a priest, to offer what was meet in sacrifice to God; whereon, no doubt, according to the custom of those times, there was a feast, wherein they ate bread together, and were mutually refreshed. (3.) This matter was afterwards precisely determined in the law, wherein all tithes were appropriated unto the priests. I observe these things, only to show that the apostle had just ground to infer from hence the sacerdotal power of Melchisedec, and his pre-eminence in that office above Abraham. For every thing in the Scripture is significant, and hath its especial design, the whole being inlaid with truth by infinite wisdom, whether we apprehend it or no. Without this light given by the Holy Spirit himself, how should we have conceived that this giving the tenth of the spoils to Melchisedec was designed to prove his greatness and dignity above Abraham and all the Levitical priests on that account, as the great type and representative of Jesus Christ? And indeed all the mysteries of sacred truth which are contained in the Old Testament, are seen clearly only in the light of the New; and the doctrine of the Gospel is the only rule and measure of the interpretation of the writings of the Old Testament. Wherefore, although the writings of both are equally the word of God, yet the revelation made immediately by Jesus Christ is that which ought to be our guide in the whole. And they do but deceive themselves and others, who, in the interpretation of mystical passages and prophecies of the Old Testament, do neglect the accomplishment of them and light given unto them in the New, taking up with Jewish traditions, or vain conjectures of their own; —such as the late writings of some highly pretending unto learning are stuffed withal. And we may see from hence, (1.) How necessary it is for us, according to the command of our Saviour, to "search the Scriptures," John 5:39;—ἐρευνᾶν, to make a scrupulous inquiry, a diligent investigation, to find out things hidden, or parcels of gold ore. So are we directed to "seek for wisdom as silver, and to search for her as for hid treasures," Prov. 2:4. There are precious, useful, significant truths in the Scripture, so disposed of, so laid up, as that if we accomplish not a diligent search we shall never set eye on them. The common course of reading the Scripture, and the common help of expositors,—who for the most part go in the same track, and scarce venture one step beyond those that are gone before them,—will not suffice, if we intend a discovery of these hid treasures. This diligent search was attended unto by the prophets themselves

under the old testament, with respect unto their own prophecies, which they received by inspiration, 1 Pet. 1:10, 11. God gave out those deep and sacred truths by them which they comprehended not, but made diligent inquiry into the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words which themselves had spoken. What belongs unto this diligent search shall be elsewhere declared. (2.) That the clear revelations of the New Testament ought to be our principal rule in the interpretation of difficult passages in the Old. What our apostles in these cases had by immediate inspiration and direction, that we must look for from what is recorded in their writings; which is sufficient for us, and will not fail us.

There is great inquiry usually made on this place, whether tithes be due by the light of nature, or at least by such a moral-positive command of God as should be perpetually obligatory unto all worshippers unto the end of the world. This many contend for, and the principal reasons which they plead from the Scripture are these: 1. That tithes were paid before the law as well as under the law; and what was so observed in the worship of God,—namely, that being in usage before the law, and confirmed by the law,—is originally of the law of nature, and could have no other fountain. 2. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, speaking of tithing mint and cummin, approveth of it, affirming that those things ought not to be omitted, though the most inferior instance that could be given of the duty. 3. He seems in like manner to have respect thereunto, when he commands to "give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," which were the tithes; the law concerning them being thereby confirmed, which proves it not to be ceremonial. And this some men judge to be a certain argument of that which is moral and unalterable,—namely, the appointed usage of it before the law, under the law, and under the gospel after the expiration of the law of ceremonies, or "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." And it seems so to be, if there be the same reason of the law or command in all these seasons; for otherwise it is not so. For instance, it is supposed that the eating of blood was forbidden before the law, and assuredly it was so under the law, and is so in the New Testament, Acts 15: which yet proves it not to be morally evil and perpetually forbidden; for it is not so upon the same grounds and reasons. For in that place of Gen. 9:4, "But flesh with the life thereof, that is, the blood thereof, shall ye not eat," blood is not absolutely forbidden, but in some cases, and with respect unto a certain end. It was not to be eaten whilst it was yet hot and warm in the flesh; which prohibition God gave to prevent that savage custom which yet afterwards got ground among men, of eating flesh, like ravenous beasts, whilst the blood was

yet warm in it. Under the law it was forbidden, because God had taken it to be the principal part of sacrifices, and far the most significant, Lev. 17:5, 6, 11, 14. And in the 15th of the Acts it is only occasionally forbidden for a season, to avoid scandal and offence. So that if it should be supposed that the matter of the prohibition before the law, under the law, and in that synod at Jerusalem, were the same, yet the reasons of it being various, it doth not prove a morality in the law, or such as should be everlastingly obligatory. But where not only the subject-matter, but the formal reason of the command is the same, there it is of natural equity, and unalterable; and so it is said to be in the case of tithes.

I shall not enter into any long digression about this controverted subject. It is such as wherein the various interests of men have engaged their utmost diligence, on the one hand and on the other. But this I am sure enough of, that unless they were paid by them that give them with more conscience and regard unto duty than generally they seem to be, not one in a thousand having respect in the payment of them to any thing but the civil law of the land; and unless they were turned unto a better account with them by whom they are received than generally they do; it is to no great purpose to dispute upon what grounds or by what right they are due unto any. And without solicitousness concerning offence, I shall take leave to say, that it is no safe plea for many to insist on, that tithes are due and divine, as they speak,—that is, by a binding law of God,—now under the gospel. For be the law and institution what it will, nothing is more certain than that there is nothing due under the gospel, by virtue of God's command or institution with respect unto his worship, unto any who do not wholly give up themselves unto the ministry, and "labour in the word and doctrine;" unless they be such as are disenabled by age and infirmities, who are not to be forsaken all the days of their lives. For men to live in pleasure and idleness, according to the pomp, vanities, and grandeur of the world, neither rising early, nor going to bed late, nor spending their time and strength in the service of the church, according to the duties required of all the ministers thereof in the gospel, to sing unto themselves that tithes are due to them by the appointment and law of God, is a fond imagination, a dream that will fill them with perplexity when they shall awake. But as unto the question in hand, I shall briefly give my thoughts about it in the ensuing observations and propositions:—

By "tithes" is understood either the express law of tithing, or paying the tenth of all our substance and of the whole increase of the earth; or only the dedicating of a certain portion of what we have unto the uses of the worship and

service of God. 1. If this latter be intended, it is with me past all doubt and question that a bountiful part of our enjoyments is to be separated unto the use and service of the worship of God, particularly unto the comfortable and honourable supportment of them that labour in the ministry. And it is no small part of that confusion which we suffer under, that Christians, being in all places compelled to pay the tenth by civil laws unto some or other, whether they will or no, are either discouraged, or disenabled, or think themselves discharged from doing that which God certainly requireth at their hands in a way of duty. However, this will be no excuse for any, for generally they have yet left unto them that whereby they may discharge their duty in an acceptable manner; and I cannot but wonder how some men can satisfy their consciences in this matter, in such circumstances as I shall not now name.

2. If the strict legal course of tithing be intended, it cannot be proved from this text, nor from any other instance before the law; for Abraham gave only the tenth of the spoils, which were not tithable by law. For if the places taken or destroyed in war were anathematized, as Jericho was, and also Amalek, no portion was to be reserved, under a pretence of sacrifice or any other sacred use; as Saul found to his cost. And if they were not anathematized, all the spoils were left entirely unto the people that went to war, without any sacred decimation. So the Reubenites and the Gadites, at their return over Jordan into their own land, carried all their rich spoils and cattle with them, no tithe being mentioned, Josh. 22:8;—although there is no question but many of them offered their free-will offerings at the tabernacle. And when God would have a sacred portion out of the spoils, as he would have in the wilderness, out of those that were taken from the Midianites, to manifest that they fell not under the law of tithes, he took not the tenth part, but one portion of five hundred from the soldiers, and one of fifty from the people, Numb. 31:28–30. Wherefore the giving of the tenth of the spoils was not from the obligation of any law, but was an act of free-will and choice in the offerer. But yet there was so great an equity herein also,—namely, that God should have an acknowledgment in the fruits of those successes which he gave in war,—that out of the spoils of his and his people's enemies David made his provision for the building of the temple. And the captains of the host that went against Midian, after a tribute was raised for the Lord out of the spoils according unto the proportions mentioned, when they found the goodness of God in the preservation of their soldiers, whereof there was not one lost, they made a new voluntary oblation unto God out of their spoils, Numb. 31:48–50. And as for the instance of Jacob, who vowed unto

God the tenth of all, it is so far from proving that the tenth was due by virtue of any law, that it proves the contrary. For had it been so, it could not have been the matter of an extraordinary vow, whereby he could express his obedience unto God.

3. The precise law of tithing is not confirmed in the gospel. For that saying of our Saviour's approving the tithing of mint and cummin, evidently respects that legal institution which was then in force, and could not be violated without sin. And by his approbation of that law, and of the duty in observance of it, he did no more confirm it, or ascribe an obligatory power unto it under the gospel, than he did so unto all those other ceremonial institutions which both he himself observed as a man made under the law, and enjoined others so to do. They all continued in full force "until the time of reformation," which gave them their bounds and limits, Heb. 9:10, and ended with his resurrection. His other saying, of "giving unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," respects our whole moral obedience unto God, and not this or that particular institution. The meaning of it is, that we are to pay or perform unto God all whatever he requireth of us in a way of obedience; but what that is in particular, is not here determined. And other mention of tithes in the gospel there is none.

4. Whereas by the light of nature, all rules of reason and positive institutions, a portion of what God is pleased to give unto every man is to be returned unto him, in the way of his worship and service, wherein it may be used according unto his appointment; and whereas before the giving of the law sundry holy men fixed on the tenth part, as that which was meetest to be so dedicated unto God, and that, as is probable, not without some especial conduct of the Holy Spirit, if not upon express revelation; and whereas this was afterwards expressly confirmed under the law by positive institution, the equity whereof is urged in the gospel; it is the best direction that can be given unto any what proportion of their estate should be set apart unto this purpose. Herein, I confess, so many circumstances are in particular cases to be considered, as that it is impossible any one certain rule should be prescribed unto all persons. But whereas withal there is no need in the least to furnish men with pleas and excuses for the non-performance of their duty, at least as unto the necessary degrees of it, I shall not suggest any thing unto them which may be used to that purpose. I shall therefore leave this rule in its full latitude, as the best direction of practice in this matter.

5. On these suppositions it is that the apostle, treating of this matter, makes no use of the right or law of tithing, though directly unto his purpose if it had not been abrogated. For intending to prove that the ministers of the gospel ought to be liberally supported in their work with the earthly things of them unto whom they do administer the things of God, he argueth from the light of nature, the general equity of other cases, the analogy of legal institutions, the rules of justice, with the especial institution of Christ in the gospel, but makes no mention of the natural or legal right of tithing, 1 Cor. 9:7–14. And farther I shall not at present divert on this subject. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. XXIV. Whatsoever we receive signally from God in a way of mercy, we ought to return a portion of it unto him in a way of duty.—That this was the practice of the saints of old might easily be proved by an induction of instances, from this act of Abraham (yea, from the sacrifice of Abel) down to the vow of Jacob, the dedications of David, Solomon, and others, in their respective places and generations. The light of nature also counted it as a duty among all the civilized heathens. The offerings and sacred dedications of nations and private families are famous on this account. And it was laid as a lasting blemish on good Hezekiah, that he rendered not unto the Lord according to the mercy which he had received.

And we may do well to consider, 1. That no man hath any great or signal success in any affair or occasion, more than others, or more than at other times, but there will be in his mind an ascription of it unto one cause or another. This the nature of things makes necessary, nor can it be avoided, Hab. 1:11. 2. That whatever a man doth secretly ascribe such success unto, that he makes in some sense his god. "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous," Hab. 1:16. They ascribed their successes unto their own strength, endeavours, and means that they used. Hereby they deified themselves as far as in them lay; and therefore these thoughts are called sacrificing and burning incense, which were expressions of religious worship. And it is no better with us, when, in our successes in our trades and affairs, we secretly applaud our own endeavours and the means we have used as the only causes of them. 3. It is a great sign that a man hath not engaged God in the getting of any thing, when he will not entitle him unto any portion of what is gotten. There are two evils common in the world in this case. Some will make no acknowledgment unto God, in the especial consecration of any part of their substance unto him, where it is lawfully gotten; and some will make great dedications of what hath been gotten by

robbery, spoils, oppression, and violence. Many public works of munificence and charity, as they are called, have had no other original. This is but an endeavour to entitle God unto injustice, and draw him to a copartnership with them, by giving him a share in the advantage. God "hateth robbery for burnt-offering," Isa. 61:8; and "he smiteth his hand at men's dishonest gain," Ezek. 22:13. He will have nothing to do with such things, nor accept of any portion of them or from them, however he may overpower things in his providence unto his glory. Both these ways are full of evil, though the latter be the worst. 4. No man hath any ground to reckon that he can settle what he hath unto himself or his, where this chief rent unto God is left unpaid. He will at one time or other make a re-entry upon the whole, take the forfeiture of it, and turn the ungrateful tenant out of possession. And, among other things, this makes so many estates industriously gotten so speedily moulder away as we see they do in the world. 5. God hath always his receivers ready to accept of what is tendered, namely, his poor, and those that attend the ministry of his house.

Seventhly, The apostle pursues his design and argument from the name and title of the person spoken of, with their interpretation: "First being, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, that is, King of peace." And we shall consider herein, 1. The names themselves, with their interpretation. 2. The grounds or reasons of the apostle's arguing from this interpretation. 3. What is intended in them, or what he would have us learn from them. 4. Their order, which he particularly observes.

Μελχισεδεκ. 1. He respecteth (1.) His proper name,—that is, Melchisedec; for the fancy of some, that Sedec was a place or city where first he reigned, as he did afterwards at Salem, is very fond. For then he must be utterly without a name belonging unto his person; which the apostle doth not observe, as he would have done one way or other, had any such unusual thing offered itself unto him. Besides, had it been so, he would not have been called Melchisedec, but rather Melec Sedec, as he is said to be Melec Salem. מֶלֶךְ is a "king;" and by the interposition of yod to smooth the composition, the former segol is turned into pathach, and the latter into shevah, whence Melchi ariseth. Βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης. Some would have this yod to be a pronoun affix; and then the meaning of the word is, "my king;" and on this supposition, taking צֶדֶק for צַדִּיק, Sedek for Saddik, they would render it, "my righteous king." But there is nothing more ordinary, in the composition of names, than the interposition of yod paragoricum, to soften the sound and pronunciation of them. So is it in Adonizedek, Adonibezek, Abimelech, Ahitub, Abishua, Abishag, Abishalom,

and sundry others. Wherefore Melchi is nothing but the name Melec, a "king," a little varied, to fit it unto the composition intended. צֶדֶק is "righteousness." And so the whole name is properly interpreted and rendered by our apostle βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης, a "king of righteousness."

Βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης. (2.) His title is, מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם, "the king of Salem;" of which place we have spoken before. This is, by interpretation, saith our apostle, βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης, the "king of peace." Some think that herein occurs a greater difficulty than did in the interpretation of his name. for שָׁלֵם, "Salem," say they, doth not signify "peace," but שָׁלוֹם, "Shalom." Salem is only as much as "pacificus," peaceable; not "pax," or peace itself. But yet neither ought this to give us any trouble. For instances may be given in this language wherein the same word is used sometimes substantively, sometimes adjectively; as, for instance, אורך, and ארך, and כבד, are. And upon the matter the signification is the same. "Rex pacificus" and "rex pacis" do both denote him that is the maker and author of peace. So God on that account is called the "God of peace," Rom. 15:33, 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20. Wherefore, as we ought to acquiesce in the authority of the apostle, who knew better than us all the signification of these names, so that he gives is proper, according unto our best conception of these things.

2. It may be inquired what ground the apostle had to argue from the signification of those names, which seems to be but a curious and infirm kind of argumentation; and we find by experience, that whilst some have followed and imitated, as they supposed, this example, they have fallen into woful mistakes.

Ans. (1.) The apostle takes it for granted in general, that every thing in the story of Melchisedec was mystical and figurative. This he did on good grounds, because the only reason of its introduction was to give a representation of the person and priesthood of Christ.

(2.) It was usual, under the old testament, to have names given unto children by a spirit of prophecy; as to Noah, Peleg, and others, yea, it may be most of the patriarchs. It was so also to have men's names changed upon some great and solemn occasions: as Abram was called Abraham; Sarai, Sarah; Jacob was called Israel; and Solomon, Jedidiah. And whereas this was sometimes done by divine authority, as in the instances mentioned, whence it was highly significant; so the people, in imitation thereof, did often give other names to themselves, or others, on some occasion wherewith they were affected. Hence it is that we find

the same persons so frequently called by divers names; which gives no little difficulty in genealogies. But where this was done by divine warranty, it was doctrinal, and prophetically instructive. So was it in that great name given unto our Lord Jesus Christ himself, namely, Immanuel; which the evangelist remembers, and gives us the interpretation thereof, Matt. 1:23. Now, whether this name was given to Melchisedec from his nativity by a spirit of prophecy, as is most probable, or whether his name was changed by God himself when he was publicly called unto his office, is uncertain, and no way needful to be inquired into; but certain it is, that this name was given him by divine direction, and that for the very end for which it is here used and applied by our apostle. And no countenance can hence be taken unto their curiosity who seek for mysteries out of names and their numbers, which, for aught they know, had a casual imposition, or that which respected some particular occasion whereof they are utterly ignorant.

(3.) As for the name of the place where he reigned, or Salem, it was also given unto it on the same ground, to be presignificative of the work that was to be effected by Him whom he typed out. Most probably at that time God first gave that name unto that place; for that it was not the Salem by Sychem we have before declared. And I am persuaded that God himself, by some providence of his, or other intimation of his mind, gave that name of Peace first unto that city, because there he designed not only to rest in his typical worship for a season, but also in the fulness of time there to accomplish the great work of peace-making between himself and mankind. Hence it was afterwards, by the same guidance, called Jerusalem, or a Vision of Peace, because of the many visions and prophecies concerning the spiritual and eternal peace which was to be wrought and published in that place; as also from all those holy institutions of his worship which there represented the means whereby that peace was to be wrought, namely, the sacrifice of Christ himself, the only real and proper priest of the church.

Wherefore our apostle doth justly argue from the signification of those names, which were given both to the person and place by divine authority and guidance, that they might teach and fore-signify the things whereunto by him they are applied.

3. The interpretation of the names being proper, and the argument from thence in this case useful, as to the signification of them, it must be inquired how this man was "king of righteousness and peace." Most suppose that no more is intended but that he was a righteous and peaceable king, one that ruled

righteously and lived peaceably. And it is true that absolutely in himself, and as unto his own personal qualifications, he was so, and no more, nor could be more. But these names have respect to his relative state, and were given him as a type of Christ. He was a "king of righteousness and peace" as he was "without father and without mother;" that is, to represent Christ in his office. Really, he was a righteous and peaceable king; typically, he was the "king of righteousness and peace." Now, "the king of righteousness" is him who is the author, cause, and dispenser of righteousness unto others; as God is said to be "The LORD our Righteousness." And so is "the king of peace" also; in which sense God is called "the God of peace." Thus was it with Melchisedec as he was the representative of Jesus Christ.

4. The last thing that the apostle observes from these names and titles, is their order, wherein it is natural that the name of a man should precede the title of his rule: "First, King of righteousness, and afterwards King of peace." Righteousness must go first, and then peace will follow after. So it is promised of Christ and his kingdom, that "in his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth," Ps. 72:7. First they are made righteous, and then they have peace. And Isa. 32:17, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and peace for ever." This is the order of these things. There is no peace but what proceedeth from, and is the effect of righteousness. So these things with respect unto Christ are declared by the psalmist, Ps. 85:9–13. What we are taught hence is,—

Obs. XXV. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only king of righteousness and peace unto the church. See Isa. 32:1, 2, 9:6.—He is not only a righteous and peaceable king, as were his types, Melchisedec and Solomon; but he is the author, cause, procurer, and dispenser of righteousness and peace to the church. So is it declared, Jer. 23:5, 6, "Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness." He is righteous, and reigneth righteously; but this is not all, he is "The LORD our Righteousness."

Eighthly, The apostle proceeds yet unto other instances in the description of Melchisedec, wherein he was "made like unto the Son of God:" Verse 3, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." The things here asserted, being at the first view strange and uncouth, would administer occasion unto large discourses, and accordingly

have been the subject of many inquiries and conjectures; but it is no way unto the edification of those who are sober and godly, to engage into any long disputes about those things wherein all learned, sober expositors are come to an issue and agreement, as they are in general in this matter. For it is granted that Melchisedec was a man, really and truly so, and therefore of necessity must have had all these things; for the nature of man, after him who was first created, who yet also had beginning of life and end of days, doth not exist without them. Wherefore these things are not denied of him absolutely, but in some sense, and with respect unto some especial end. Now this is with respect unto his office; therein, or as he bare that office, he was "without father, without mother," etc. And how doth it appear that so it was with him? It doth so because none of them is recorded or mentioned in the Scripture, which yet diligently recordeth them concerning other persons; and in particular, those who could not find and prove their genealogies were by no means to be admitted unto the priesthood, Ezra 2:61–63. And we may therefore by this rule inquire into the particulars:—

Ἀπάτωρ. Ἀμήτωρ. 1. It is said of him in the first place, that he was "without father, without mother," whereon part of the latter clause, namely, "without beginning of days," doth depend. But how could a mortal man come into the world without father or mother? "Man that is born of a woman," is the description of every man; what therefore can be intended? Ἀγενεαλόγητος. The next word declares he was ἀγενεαλόγητος,—"without descent," say we. But γενεαλογία is a "generation, a descent, a pedigree," not absolutely, but "rehearsed, described, recorded." Γενεαλόγητος is he whose stock and descent is entered upon record. And so on the contrary, ἀγενεαλόγητος is not he who hath no descent, no genealogy, but he whose descent and pedigree is nowhere entered, recorded, reckoned up. Thus the apostle himself plainly expresseth this word, verse 6, Ὁ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν,—"whose descent is not counted;" that is, reckoned up in record. Thus was Melchisedec without father and mother, in that the Spirit of God, who so strictly and exactly recorded the genealogies of other patriarchs and types of Christ, and that for no less an end than to manifest the truth and faithfulness of God in his promises, speaks nothing unto this purpose concerning him. He is introduced as it were one falling from heaven, appearing on a sudden, reigning in Salem, and officiating the office of the priesthood unto the most high God.

Μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν, μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων. 2. On the same account is he said to be "without beginning of days and end of life." For as he was a mortal man he had both. He was assuredly born, and did no less certainly die, than other men;

but neither of these is recorded concerning him. We have no more to do with him, to learn from him, nor are concerned in him, but only as he is described in the Scripture, and there is no mention therein of the beginning of his days, or the end of his life. Whatever, therefore, he might have in himself, he had none to us. Consider all the other patriarchs mentioned in the writings of Moses, and you shall find their descent recorded, who was their father, and so upwards unto the first man; and not only so, but the time of their birth and death, the beginning of their days and the end of their lives, is exactly recorded. For it is constantly said of them, such a one lived so long, and begat such a son; which fixeth the time of birth. Then of him so begotten it is said he lived so many years; which determines the end of his days. These things are expressly recorded. But concerning Melchisedec none of these things are spoken. No mention is made of father or mother, no genealogy is recorded of what stock or progeny he was; nor is there any account of his birth or death. So that all these things are wanting unto him in this historical narration, wherein our faith and knowledge are alone concerned. Some few things may yet further be inquired into for the clearing of the sense of these words:—

(1.) Whereas the observation of the apostle is built upon the silence of Moses in the history,—which was sufficient for him, whatever was the cause and reason of that silence,—we may inquire whence it was. Whence was it, I say, that Moses should introduce so great and excellent a person as Melchisedec without any mention of his race or stock, of his parents or progenitors, of his rise and fall, contrary unto his own custom in other cases, and contrary unto all rules of useful history? For to introduce so great a person, in any story, and on so great an occasion, without giving any account of him, or of any of his circumstances, whereby his concernment in the matter related might be known, is utterly contrary unto all rules of serious history.

Ans. [1.] Some of the Jews absurdly imagine that it was because his parents were not only obscure, but that he was born of fornication, and so he had no right of genealogy. But this is both a foolish and wicked imagination. For it is not to be supposed God would have advanced a person known to be of such an extract and original unto the honour of the priesthood, and that of the most excellent kind that ever was under the old testament. For being low and mean in the world, it is neither disadvantage nor disparagement; the best of men were so, and all the chief patriarchs were but shepherds. But bastardy is a mark of infamy in the world, and God would not raise such an one to administer peculiarly unto him, and that as a type of his own Son, who was to be incarnate.

[2.] Some say that there is no singular thing herein, but that it is done according to the custom of Scripture, which relates only the genealogies of the patriarchs who were of that lineage from whence Christ did come; but when it makes mention of any others, though they be never so eminent, it reckoneth not up their genealogy. Thus it dealeth with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses; and with Job, so great and holy a person, concerning whom it says no more but that "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job." And some things may be allowed herein; but the instances are no way parallel. For Jethro, he was a stranger unto the church, and there is a full account concerning him, so far as it is either necessary or useful that we should in point of story know any thing of him. And the story of Job is a separate story, wherein himself only and family were concerned; and we have therein his country, the number and names of his children, with the years of his life, and time of his death. But as we have none of these things in the account of Melchisedec, so he is introduced as one in whom the church of God was publicly concerned. Wherefore,—

[3.] The true cause of the omission of all these things was the same with that of the institution of his priesthood, and the introduction of his person in the story. And this was, that he might be the more express and signal representative of the Lord Christ in his priesthood. For to this end it was not only needful that he should be declared to be a priest, as the Messiah was to be, but also in that declaration all those circumstances were to be observed wherein the nature of the priesthood of Christ might be any way prefigured. After this, the church being reduced into a standing order for succession, it was obliged necessarily for many generations unto a priesthood which depended solely on their genealogy and pedigree both by father and mother, Ezra 10:18, 19; Neh. 7:63–65. Wherefore, whereas the priesthood of our Lord Christ was to depend on no such descent, ("for it is evident that our Lord sprang of Judah, whereof Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood,") it was necessary that it should be originally represented by one who had no genealogy, seeing that, as unto his office, he himself was to have none. And therefore, when the church of Israel was in the highest enjoyment of the Levitical priesthood,—whose office depended wholly on their genealogy, yea, so far as that on a supposition of a defect or change thereof, not only the priesthood itself, but all the sacred worship also which it was designed to officiate, must utterly cease,—yet the Holy Ghost then thought meet to mind them that a priest was to come without respect unto any such descent or genealogy, in that he was to be "after the order

of Melchisedec," who had none, Ps. 110:4. This is the true and only reason why, in the story of Melchisedec as the priest of the most high God, there is no mention made of father, mother, genealogy, beginning of life, or end of days.

And we may herein consider the sovereign wisdom of the Holy Ghost, in bringing forth truth unto light according as the state and condition of the church doth require. And first, he proposeth only a naked story of a person that was a type of Christ, and that obscurely and sparingly. Something the men of the age wherein he lived might learn by his ministrations, but not much. For that which was principally instructive in him for the use of the church was not of force until all his circumstances were forgotten; and the church was now to be instructed, not so much by what he was, as by what was recorded of him: wherein the Scripture superseded all tradition that might be of him in the world; yea, the contrivance of any tradition concerning his parents, birth, and death, had been contrary to the mind of God, and what instruction he intended the church by him. Afterwards, when, it may be, all thoughts of any use or design of this story in Moses were lost, and the church was fully satisfied in a priesthood quite of another nature, the Holy Ghost, in one word of prophecy, instructs the church, not only that the things spoken concerning Melchisedec were not so recorded for his sake, or on his own account, but with respect unto another priest which was afterwards to arise, by him represented,—which gave a new consideration, sense, and design to the whole story,—but moreover gives it to know that the priesthood which it then enjoyed was not always to continue, but that another of another nature was to be introduced, as was signified long before the institution of that priesthood which they enjoyed, Ps. 110:4. And though this was sufficient for the use and edification of the church in those days, yet it was left greatly in the dark as to the full design and meaning of these things. And therefore it is evident that at the coming of our Saviour, and the accomplishment of this type, the church of the Jews had utterly lost all knowledge and understanding of the mystery of it, and the promise renewed in the psalm. For they thought it strange that there should be a priest that had no genealogy, no solemn consecration nor investiture, with his office. Wherefore our apostle, entering upon the unfolding of this mystery, doth not only preface it with an assertion of its difficulty, or how hard it was to be understood aright, but also, by a long previous discourse, variously prepareth their minds unto a most diligent attention. And the reason of it was, not only because they had utterly lost the understanding that was given in these things formerly, but also because the true understanding of them would put an end at that time unto that

priesthood and worship which they had adhered unto. Wherefore until this time the church was not able to bear the true understanding of this mystery, and now they could no longer be without it. Hence it is here so fully and particularly declared by our apostle. And we may observe,—

Obs. XXVI. That the church never did in any age, nor ever shall, want that instruction by divine revelation which is needful unto its edification in faith and obedience.—This it had in all ages, according unto that gradual progression which God gave unto light and truth in the explication of the great mystery of his grace, which was hid in him from the foundation of the world. An instance hereof we have in the things which concern this Melchisedec, as we have observed. The church had never need to look after the traditions of their fathers, or to betake themselves unto their own inventions; their instruction by revelation was always sufficient for the state and condition wherein they were. Much more, therefore, is it so now, when the sum and perfection of all divine revelations is given in unto us by Jesus Christ.

Obs. XXVII. It is a great honour to serve in the church, by doing or suffering, for the use and service of future generations.—This was the honour of Melchisedec, that he was employed in a service the true use and advantage whereof was not given in unto the church until many generations after. And I add suffering unto doing, because it is well known what glories have sprung up in future ages, upon the past sufferings of others.

Obs. XXVIII. The Scripture is so absolutely the rule, measure, and boundary of our faith and knowledge in spiritual things, as that what it conceals is instructive, as well as what it expresseth.—This the apostle manifests in many of his observations concerning Melchisedec, and his inferences from thence. But I have, as I remember, discoursed somewhat hereof before.

(2.) Our next inquiry is, wherein Melchisedec was typical of Christ, or what of all this belongeth unto the following assertion that "he was made like unto the Son of God;" that is, so described as that he might have a great resemblance of him.

Ans. It is generally thought that he was so in the whole, and in every particular mentioned distinctly. Thus he is said to be "without father, and without mother" (no mention is made of them), because the Lord Christ was in some sense so also. He was without father on earth as to his human nature; with respect whereunto God says that he will "create a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man," Jer. 31:22,—or conceive a man without natural

generation. And he was without mother as to his person or divine nature, being the "only begotten of the Father," by an eternal generation of his own person. But yet it must not be denied but that, on the other side, he had both father and mother,—a father as to his divine, and a mother as to his human nature; but as to his whole person, he was without father and mother. Again, whereas he is said to be "without genealogy," it is of somewhat a difficult application; for the genealogy of Christ was βίβλος γενέσεως, or סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת. The "roll of his pedigree" is declared by two of the evangelists, the one driving of it up to Abraham, the other unto Adam; as it was necessary, to manifest the truth of his human nature and the faithfulness of God in the accomplishment of his promises. It may be, therefore, respect is had unto these words of the prophet, Isa. 53:8, דּוֹרוֹ מִי יְשׂוֹחֵחַ,—"Who shall declare his generation?" there was somewhat in his age and generation, by reason of his divine pre-existence unto all, that was ineffable.

Again, he is said to be "without beginning of days and end of life." And this also is spoken by our apostle with respect unto the narration of Moses, wherein mention is made neither of the one nor of the other. And it belongs unto his conformity unto the Son of God, or that wherein he represented him; for as unto his divine person, the Lord Christ had neither the one nor the other, as the apostle proves, Heb. 1:10–12, from Ps. 102:25–27. But on the other side, as to his human nature he had both, he had both beginning of days and end of life; both which are upon solemn record. Wherefore it should seem that if there be a likeness in these things on the one account, there is none on the other, and so no advantage in the comparison.

Considering these difficulties in the application of these particulars, some do judge that these instances do not belong unto the analogy and resemblance between Christ and Melchisedec, but are introduced only in order unto what ensues, namely, he "abideth a priest for ever," wherein alone the similitude between him and Christ doth consist. And so, they say, we find things quoted in the Scripture at large, when only some one passage in it may be used directly unto the business in hand. But although this will be difficultly proved,—namely, that any testimony is cited in the Scripture whereof any principal part of it belongs not unto the matter designed to be confirmed,—yet it may be granted that it is so sometimes, when the sense of the whole context is to be taken in. But there was no reason, on this ground, that the apostle should make

so many observations on what was not spoken at all, which in an ordinary way ought to have been mentioned, if the whole of what he so observed was not at all to his purpose.

Wherefore it must be granted, as that which the plain design of the apostle exacteth of us, that Melchisedec even in these things in the story,—that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life,"—was a type and representative of Christ. But it is not of the person of Christ absolutely, nor of either of his natures distinctly, that our apostle treateth, but merely with respect unto his office of priesthood. And herein all the things mentioned do concur in him, and make a lively representation of him. It was utterly a new doctrine unto the Hebrews, that the Lord Christ was a priest, the only high priest of the church, so as that all other priesthood must cease. And their chief objection against it was, that it was contrary unto the law, and inconsistent with it; and this because he was not of the line of the priests, neither as to father, or mother, or genealogy, nor had any to succeed him. But in this type of his the apostle proves that all this was to be so. For, [1.] In this respect he had neither father nor mother from whom he might derive any right or title unto his office; and this was for ever sufficient to exclude him from any interest in the priesthood as it was established by law. [2.] He had no genealogy upon the priestly line; and that which is recorded of him on other accounts is so far from having respect unto his right unto the priesthood of the law, that it directly proves and demonstrates that he had none. For his genealogy is evidently of the tribe of Judah, which was excluded legally from that office; as we have, besides the institution, an instance in king Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:16–21, from Exod. 30:7, 8; Numb. 18:7. Hence our apostle concludes, that had he been on the earth,—that is, under the order of the law,—he could not have been a priest; there being others who, by virtue of their descent, had alone the right thereunto, Heb. 8:3, 4. Wherefore God in these things instructed the church that he would erect a priesthood which should no way depend on natural generation, descent, or genealogy; whence it inevitably follows, that the state of the priesthood under the law was to cease, and to give place unto another,—which our apostle principally designs to prove. [3.] In this respect also the Lord Christ was "without beginning of days and end of life." For although in his human nature he was both born and died, yet he had a priesthood which had no such beginning of days as that it should be traduced from any other to him, nor shall ever cease or be delivered over from him unto any other, but abides unto the consummation of all things.

Ἀφωμοιωμένος τῷ γίῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ. In these things was Melchisedec made like unto Christ, whom the apostle here calls the Son of God; "made like unto the Son of God." I have formerly observed, that in this epistle the apostle makes mention of the Lord Christ under various appellations, on various occasions, so that in one place or another he makes use of all the names whereby he is signified in the Scripture. Here he calls him "the Son of God;" and that, 1. To intimate that although Melchisedec was an excellent person, yet was he infinitely beneath him whom he represented, even the Son of God. He was not the Son of God, but he had the honour in so many things to be made like unto him. 2. To declare how all those things which were any way represented in Melchisedec, or couched in the story, or left unto inquiry by the veil of silence drawn over them, could be fulfilled in our high priest;—and it was from hence, namely, that he was the Son of God. By virtue hereof was he capable of an always living, abiding, uninterrupted priesthood, although as to his human nature he once died, in the discharge of that office.

Μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ δηνεκές. This description being given of the person treated of, which makes up the subject of the proposition, it is affirmed concerning him that he "abideth a priest for ever." For any thing we find in the story, of his death, or the resignation of his office, or the succession of any one unto him therein, "he abideth a priest for ever." Some, I find, have been venturing at some obscure conjectures of the perpetuity of the priesthood of Melchisedec in heaven. But I cannot perceive that they well understood themselves what they intended. Nor did they consider that the real continuance of the priesthood for ever in the person of Melchisedec, is as inconsistent with the priesthood of Christ as the continuance of the same office in the line of Aaron. But things are so related concerning him in the Scripture, as that there is no mention of the ending of the priesthood of his order, nor of his own personal administration of his office, by death or otherwise. Hence is he said to "abide a priest for ever." This was that which our apostle principally designed to confirm from hence, namely, that there was in the Scripture, before the institution of the Aaronical priesthood, a representation of an eternal, unchangeable priesthood, to be introduced in the church; which he demonstrates to be that of Jesus Christ.

It may not be amiss, in the close of this exposition of these verses, summarily to represent the several particulars wherein the apostle would have us to observe the likeness between Melchisedec and Christ; or rather, the especial excellencies and properties of Christ that were represented in the account given of the name, reign, person, and offices of Melchisedec; as,—

1. He was said to be, and he really was, and he only, first the king of righteousness, and then the king of peace; seeing he alone brought in everlasting righteousness and made peace with God for sinners. And in his kingdom alone are these things to be found.

2. He was really and truly the priest of the most high God; and properly he was so alone. He offered that sacrifice, and made that atonement, which was signified by all the sacrifices offered by holy men from the foundation of the world.

3. He blesseth all the faithful, as Abraham, the father of the faithful, was blessed by Melchisedec. In him were they to be blessed, by him are they blessed, —through him delivered from the curse, and all the fruits of it; nor are they partakers of any blessing but from him.

4. He receiveth all the homage of his people, all their grateful acknowledgments of the love and favour of God in the conquest of their spiritual adversaries, and deliverance from them, as Melchisedec received the tenth of the spoils from Abraham.

5. He was really without progenitors or predecessors unto his office; nor would I exclude that mystical sense from the intention of the place, that he was without father as to his human nature, and without mother as to his divine.

6. He was a priest without genealogy, or derivation of his pedigree from the loins of Aaron, or any other that ever was a priest in the world; and moreover, mysteriously, was of a generation which none can declare.

7. He had, in his divine person, as the high priest of the church, neither beginning of days nor end of life, as no such thing is reported of Melchisedec; for the death which he underwent, in the discharge of his office, being not the death of his whole person, but of his human nature only, no interruption of his endless office did ensue thereon. For although the person of the Son of God died, whence God is said to "redeem his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28; yet he died not in his whole person: but as the Son of man was in heaven whilst he was speaking on the earth, John 3:13,—namely, he was so in his divine nature; so whilst he was dead on the earth in his human nature, the same person was alive in his divine. Absolutely, therefore, nor in respect of his office, he had neither beginning of days nor end of life.

8. He was really the Son of God, as Melchisedec in many circumstances was made like to the Son of God.

9. He alone abideth a priest for ever; whereof we must particularly treat afterwards.

The doctrinal observations that may be taken from these verses are,—

Obs. XXIX. When any were of old designed to be types of Christ, there was a necessity that things more excellent and glorious should be spoken or intimated of them than did properly belong unto them.—So, many things are here observed of Melchisedec which were not properly and literally fulfilled in him. And so there are likewise of David and Solomon, in sundry places. And the reason is, because the things so spoken were never intended of them absolutely, but as they were designed to represent the Lord Christ, unto whom alone they did truly belong. And in the exposition of such typical prophecies, the utmost diligence is to be used in distinguishing aright what is absolutely spoken of the type only, and what is spoken of it merely as representing Christ himself.

Obs. XXX. All that might be spoken, so as to have any probable application in any sense unto things and persons typically, coming short of what was to be fulfilled in Christ, the Holy Ghost, in his infinite wisdom, supplied that defect, by ordering the account which he gives of them so as more might be apprehended and learned from them than could be expressed.—And where the glory of his person, as vested with his office, could not be represented by positive applications, it is done by a mystical silence, as in this story of Melchisedec. And the most eminent and glorious things assigned unto types, as such, have a more glorious signification in Christ than they have in them. See to this purpose our exposition on chap. 1:5.

Obs. XXXI. That Christ, abiding a priest for ever, hath no more a vicar, or successor, or substitute in his office, or any deriving a real priesthood from him, than had Melchisedec; whereof we shall speak afterwards.

Obs. XXXII. The whole mystery of divine wisdom, effecting all inconceivable perfections, centred in the person of Christ, to make him a meet, glorious, and most excellent priest unto God in the behalf of the church.—This it is the principal design of the whole gospel to demonstrate, namely, to declare that all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge are hid in Jesus Christ, Col. 2:3. The constitution of his person was the greatest mystery that ever infinite wisdom effected, 1 Tim. 3:16. And thereby did God gloriously represent himself and all his infinite perfections unto us, Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:14, 15; 2 Cor. 4:6. Had he not had the divine nature, he could not have been the "express image" of God in himself; and had he not been man, he could not have represented him

unto us. Nor can any thing be more mysteriously glorious than the furniture of his person as mediator, with all fulness of power, wisdom, and grace, for the accomplishment of his work, John 1:16; Col. 1:18, 19, 2:9; Phil. 2:5–11. The work that he wrought, in offering himself a sacrifice and making atonement for sin, hath the highest, inconceivable impression of divine wisdom upon it, 1 John 3:16; Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9; Eph. 5:2;—and so also hath the grace that is from thence administered by him and from him, unto Jews and Gentiles, Eph. 3:8–11. And instances of the like kind may be multiplied. And we may consider thence, first, into what condition of sin and misery we were fallen by our apostasy from God, whence nothing would or could recover us but this blessed work of the whole mystery of divine wisdom; and then the unspeakable riches and excellencies of that wisdom, love, and grace, which provided this way for our recovery.

Hebrews 7: 4, 5

The proceed of these verses is unto the application of what was before discoursed. For having proved that Christ, the promised Messiah, was to be a "priest after the order of Melchisedec," from Ps. 110, and given a description both of the person and office of this Melchisedec, from the historical narration of them as laid down by Moses; he makes application of the whole unto his present purpose: and from the consideration of sundry particulars in his description, he confirms in general the argument which he had in hand. For that which principally he designeth to prove is, that a more excellent priesthood than that of Aaron being introduced, according to the purpose and promise of God, it followed necessarily that that priesthood, with all the worship, rites, and ceremonies which belonged unto it, was to cease and be taken out of the way; for as this new, promised priesthood was inconsistent with it, and could not be established without the abolition of it, so it brought a far greater benefit and spiritual advantage unto the church than it before enjoyed. And we are not to wonder that the apostle insists so much hereon, and that with all sorts of arguments, especially such as the Old Testament furnished him withal; for this was the hinge on which the eternal salvation or destruction of that whole church and people at that time did turn. For if they would not forego their old priesthood and worship, their ruin was unavoidable;—Christ would either be rejected by them, or be of no profit unto them. Accordingly things fell out thus with the most of them;—they clave absolutely unto their old institutions, and, rejecting the Lord Christ, perished in their unbelief. Others contended for the

continuance of their priesthood and worship, for which they supposed they had invincible reasons, although they admitted the profession of Christ and the gospel therewithal. But our apostle, knowing how inconsistent these things were, and how the retaining of that persuasion would keep them off at present from believing the necessity, usefulness, glory, and advantages, of the priesthood of Christ, and the spiritual worship of the gospel, as also dispose them unto apostasy for the future, laboureth by all means to eradicate this pernicious, fundamental error out of their minds. Unto this end doth he so diligently insist on all the instances, and particulars of them, whereby God of old did intimate unto their forefathers the introduction of this alteration, with the advantage of the church thereby. And I mention these things, that we may see the reason the apostle did so scrupulously, as it were, insist on all the ensuing particulars, which otherwise we may not so easily discern the necessity of; and withal to show, 1. How hard it is to dispossess the minds of men of inveterate persuasions in religion; 2. The great care and diligence they ought to use and exercise who have the care of the souls of men committed unto them, when they discern them in apparent danger of ruin.

That the old priesthood was to be removed, and the new one mentioned to be introduced, he proves in the first place by the greatness of the person who was first chosen of God to prefigure and represent the Lord Christ in his office of priesthood. For if he were so excellent in his person and office, as deservedly to be preferred above Aaron and all his successors, then he who was prefigured and represented by him must be so also; yea, be so much more, as that which is typed out and signified is, and always must be, more excellent than the type and sign, which are of no use but with respect thereunto.

In these verses he chooseth out his first instance, in what he had observed before out of the narrative of Moses concerning the greatness and excellency of Melchisedec, in that he received tithes of Abraham. His design is to prove him more excellent and greater than all the Levitical priests. But herein he takes a step backward, and begins with Abraham himself, from whom both people and priests confessedly derived all their privileges. And he produceth his instance in the case of tithes, whereon, as it is known, the whole Levitical priesthood did depend. And this the apostle knew full well, that if once he proved him greater than Abraham, he should not need, with that people, to prove him above any of his posterity, but they would immediately give over the contest. So in their exceptions unto our Saviour's testimony concerning himself, they acknowledge they could proceed no higher. "Art thou," say they, "greater than our father

Abraham? whom makest thou thyself to be?" John 8:53. But yet our apostle, not content herewith, to obviate all pretences, proves distinctly afterwards that the whole order of the Levitical priests were inferior unto him.

Ver. 4, 5.—Θεωρεῖτε δὲ, πηλίκος οὗτος, ᾧ καὶ δεκάτην Ἀβραὰμ ἔδωκεν ἐκ τῶν ἀκροθινίων ὁ πατριάρχης. Καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Λευὶ τὴν ἱερατείαν λαμβάνοντες ἐντολὴν ἔχουσιν ἀποδεκατοῦν τὸν λαὸν κατὰ τὸν νόμον, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστι, τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτῶν, καίπερ ἐξεληλυθότας ἐκ τῆς ὀσφύος Ἀβραάμ·

Θεωρῖτε δέ, "considerate," "spectate." Syr., ܚܙܘ, "videte." Vulg. Lat., "intuemini." "Consider," "behold," "contemplate." Serious consideration with diligent intuition is intended. Πηλίκος οὗτος· "Quantus his;" "sit," Vulg. Lat. "Fuerit" is supplied by others; as by us, "how great this man was." Syr., ܟܡܐ ܪܒ ܗܢܐ, "quam magnus hic." Δεκάτην ἐκ τῶν ἀκροθινίων. Beza, "decimas spoliorum;" "decimas de spoliis hostium;" "de spoliis;" Vulg. Lat., "decimas de præcipuis," of "the chiefest things." The Syriac makes a distinction: ܡܥܣܪܐ ܘܪܝܫܝܬܐ, "tithes and first-fruits."

Ver. 4.—Consider then how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

The duty of the Hebrews, upon the proposition of the state of Melchisedec, before insisted on, is here pressed on them. And the words contain both a respect unto the preceding discourse, a duty prescribed, the object of that duty, and the reason of a qualification therein expressed, amplified by the title, state, and condition of one person concerned.

Δέ. 1. The note of respect unto the preceding discourse is in the particle δέ; which we render "now," "consider now, then, or therefore." 'But do you consider. The things before laid down are, as of importance in themselves, so of your especial concernment.'

Θεωρεῖτε δέ. 2. The especial duty which he prescribes unto them, with respect unto the things proposed by him concerning the excellency of Melchisedec and his office, is, that they would "consider" it.

He doth four times in this epistle call the Hebrews unto this especial duty of an intense consideration of the things proposed unto them, as we have translated his words, and that not unduly, chap. 3:1, 10:24, 12:3, and in this place. Chap. 3:1, 10:24, we have the same word in the original, κατανοήσατε; whose importance hath been declared on chap. 3:1. Chap. 12:3, the word is ἀναλογίσασθε, which signifies "to call things unto a due reckoning and account," so as to conform our minds unto them; which is our great duty with

respect unto the patient sufferings of Christ, there intended. The word here used signifies "diligently to behold," "contemplate on," or "to look into" the things proposed unto us. He had before warned them that what he had to discourse on this subject was difficult and hard to be understood; but withal, such was its use and excellency, that neither would he refrain from declaring of them, nor ought they to spare any pains in a diligent inquiry into them. Having therefore laid down the matter of fact, and stated the whole subject which he designed to treat upon, he adds their duty with respect thereunto. And this, in the first place, is, that they would "heedfully and diligently look into them."

Obs. I. It will be fruitless, and to no advantage, to propose or declare the most important truths of the gospel, if those unto whom they are proposed do not diligently inquire into them.—And here those unto whom the dispensation of the gospel is committed are pressed with no small difficulty, as our apostle professeth that he was in this very case. For whereas it is incumbent on them, in that declaration of the whole counsel of God which is enjoined them, to insist upon sundry things that are deep, mysterious, and hard to be understood; when their hearers, for want of a good foundation of knowledge in the principles of religion, or through carelessness in attending unto what is delivered, do not come unto a due perception and understanding of them, it is very grievous to see their own labours and others' profit disappointed. Wherefore, if men think they have nothing to do but as it were to give the hearing unto such as endeavour to carry them on to perfection, they will lose all the advantage of their ministry. This duty, therefore, is here prescribed by the apostle with respect unto this truth, to obviate this slothful frame. And we may on this occasion briefly name the things that are required thereunto; as, 1. Sense of a concernment in them. Unless this be well fixed on the mind, men will never diligently attend unto them, nor duly consider them. If, upon the proposal of sacred truths that appear hard to be understood, they begin to think that this belongs not unto them, it is for others who are more exercised than they, it is not likely they would ever endeavour to apprehend them aright. And this very frame keeps many on a low form of knowledge all their days. Possibly, also, this neglect is increased in many by the spreading of a late foolish apprehension, that we are upon the matter to look after nothing but the doctrines and precepts of morality that are in the Scripture; but as for the more spiritual mysteries of grace, we are not concerned in them. Where this principle is once imbibed, men will rest and satisfy themselves in the most profound ignorance; and not only so, but despise all such as endeavour to be wiser than

themselves. But, 2. Unto a due apprehension of these things, there is not only required a sense of our concernment, but also a delight in them. If the light be not pleasant unto us, as well as useful, we shall not value it nor seek after it. When such mysterious truths as that here insisted on by our apostle are proposed unto men, if they have no delight in such things, they will never be at the cost and pains of inquiring into them with necessary diligence. Curiosity, indeed, or a humour to pry into things we have not seen, and which we cannot see in a due manner, because not revealed, is everywhere condemned by our apostle, who warns us all to be "wise unto sobriety," and not above what is written. But there is a secret delight and complacency of mind in every beam of spiritual light shining in its proper divine revelation, when the soul is disposed aright unto the reception of it. Without this in some measure, we shall not "follow on to know," nor thrive in knowledge. 3. Study, meditation, and prayer, with the diligent use of all other means appointed for the search and investigation of the truth, do close this duty. Without these things in hearers, ministers lose all their labour in the declaration of the most important mysteries of the gospel. This the apostle, as to the present case, designs to obviate in the frequent prescription of this duty.

Πηλίκος οὗτος. That which the apostle proposeth in the first place, and in general, as the object of this inquiry and consideration, is Πηλίκος οὗτος, "Quantus iste erat." The word respects greatness and excellency in any kind: "Nunc quantus Achilles," "Quantus erat Julius Cæsar," and the like. And this greatness of Melchisedec respected neither the endowments of his person, nor the largeness of his dominion, nor his riches or wealth; in which sense some are said to be great in the Scripture, as Job, Barzillai, and others: but it regards alone his dignity with respect unto his office, and his nearness unto God on that account. That which these Hebrews insisted on, as their chief and fundamental privilege in Judaism, and which they were most unwilling to forego, was the greatness of their predecessors, with their nearness unto God in favour and office. In the first way, as to divine love and favour, they gloried in Abraham, and opposed the privilege of being his children on all occasions unto the person and doctrine of Christ, John 8:33, 53. And in the latter, they thought Aaron and his successors to be preferred above all the world. And whilst they were under the power and influence of these apprehensions the gospel could not but be ungrateful unto them, as depriving them of their privileges, and rendering their condition worse than it was before. To undeceive them in this matter, and to demonstrate how unspeakably all those in whom they trusted came short of the

true high priest of the church, he calls them to consider the greatness of him whose only eminence consisted in being a type or representative of him. Wherefore the greatness of Melchisedec, here proposed unto earnest consideration, is that which he had in representing Jesus Christ, and his nearness unto God on that account. And it were well that we were all really convinced that all true greatness consists in the favour of God, and our nearness unto him, on the account of our relation unto Jesus Christ. We neither deny nor undervalue any man's wealth or power hereby. Let those who are rich and wealthy in the world be accounted and called great, as the Scripture sometimes calls them so; and let those who are high in power and authority be so esteemed, —we would derogate nothing from them which is their due: but yet the greatness of them all is but particular, with respect unto some certain things, and therefore fading and perishing; but this greatness and honour, of the favour of God and nearness unto him, on the account of relation unto Jesus Christ, is general, abiding, yea, eternal.

Ὡι καὶ δεκάτην. The proof of the apostle's assertion, included in that interrogation, "How great this man was," follows in an instance of what he had before observed and proposed unto them, "Unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils,"—ᾧ καὶ δεκάτην ἔδωκε: δεκάτην, that is μερίδα, "the tenth part." The conjunction καί is emphatical; and although in the original it is joined with δεκάτην, yet in construction it is to be understood with "Abraham;"—not, "unto whom Abraham gave even the tenth;" but, "unto whom even Abraham gave the tenth," as it is in our translation.

The proof of the greatness of Melchisedec from hence consists in three things: 1. In the nomination of the person that was subject unto him, or "Abraham." 2. In the qualification of his person; he was "the patriarch." 3. In what he did; "he gave him the tenth part of the spoils."

Ἀβραάμ. 1. As to the person himself, he was the stock and root of the whole people, their common father, in whom they were first separated from the other nations to be a people of themselves. And herein they had a singular reverence for him, as generally all nations have for the first founders of their political state; who among the idolatrous heathens were commonly deified, and made the objects of their religious adoration. But moreover, it was he who first received the promise and the covenant, with the token of it, and by whom alone they put in their claim unto all the privileges and advantages which they gloried in above all nations in the world. This Abraham, therefore, they esteemed next unto God himself. And their posterity do now place him in

heaven above the angels, hardly allowing that the Messiah himself should be exalted above him, and tell a foolish story how he took it ill that the Messiah should be on the right hand, and he on the left hand of God. But it is sufficiently evident from the Gospel, how much in those days they boasted of him, and trusted in him. Hence it is that our apostle expresseth it so emphatically, "even Abraham."

Ο πατριάρχης. 2. The qualification of his person, and his title thereon, are added in like manner: he was ὁ πατριάρχης. A "patriarch" is a father; that is, a prince or ruler of a family,—a ruling father. And these patriarchs were of three sorts among the Jews. Of the first sort was he alone who was the first separated progenitor of the whole nation. He was their אַב רֹאשׁוֹן,—the first father of all that great family. Secondly, There were such as succeeded him, from whom the whole nation in like manner descended, as Isaac and Jacob; who were "heirs with him of the same promise," Heb. 11:9. Thirdly, Such as were the first heads of their twelve tribes, into which the nation was divided; that is, the twelve sons of Jacob, who are called patriarchs, Acts 7:8, 9. Others that followed them, as David (who is also called a patriarch, Acts 2:29), were termed so in allusion unto them, and being signally the progenitors of a most eminent family among them. Now it is evident that the first of these on all accounts is the principal, and hath the pre-eminence over all the rest. And this was Abraham alone. Wherefore if any one were greater than Abraham, and that in his own time, it must be acknowledged it was upon the account of some privilege that was above all that ever that whole nation as descendants from Abraham were made partakers of. But that this was so, the apostle proves by the instance ensuing, namely, that he gave to Melchisedec, etc.

Ἔδωκε. 3. Ἔδωκε, "he gave" them; yet not arbitrarily, but in the way of a necessary duty; not as an honorary respect, but as a religious office. And he gave thus δεκάτην,—that is, μερίδα, or מַעֲשֵׂר, the "tithe portion;" delivering it up unto his use and disposal, as the priest of the most high God. Τῶν ἀκροθινίων. And this tenth was τῶν ἀκροθινίων, as the apostle interprets the passage in Moses, —of the "spoils of war." Θίν is "acervus," "a heap of corn," or any useful things; ἀκροθίνιον is the "top of the heap," the best of it, from whence the first-fruits were taken for sacred services. And because it was the custom of all nations afterwards to dedicate or devote some portion of what they got in war unto religious services, the word itself came to signify "the spoils of war." At first it was the portion that was taken out of the whole; and afterwards the whole itself was signified by it. Now, although Abraham had reserved nothing unto himself

of what belonged unto the king of Sodom and his companions, yet the army and kings which he had newly slain and destroyed having smitten sundry other nations, Gen. 14:5–7, and dealt with them as they did with Sodom and the other towns,—took all their goods and provision, verse 11,—and being now on their return home, and laden with prey, it fell all into the hand of the conqueror. "The tenth part of the spoils," in every kind, might probably be a very great offering, both for sacrifice and sacred dedication in the place where Melchisedec ministered in his office. What further concerns the greatness of this man, the apostle further declares in the ensuing verses, where it will fall under consideration. From this one instance, of Abraham's paying tithes unto him, it is in a great measure already evinced.

But how came Melchisedec to be thus great? Is it because he was originally in himself more wise and honourable than any of the sons of men? We read no such thing concerning him; which the apostle declares to be the rule and measure of all our conceptions in this matter. Is it that he attained this dignity and greatness by his own industry and endeavours? as the prophet says of some, that "their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves," Hab. 1:7. Neither do we find any thing of that nature ascribed unto him. The sole reason and cause hereof is, that God raised him up and disposed of him into that condition of his own good pleasure. And we may see in him, that,—

Obs. II. The sovereign will, pleasure, and grace of God, is that alone which puts a difference among men, especially in the church.—He makes men great or small, high or low, eminent or obscure, as it seemeth good unto him. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them," 1 Sam. 2:8; which is plentifully elsewhere testified unto. Whence was it that the twelve poor fishermen were made apostles, to "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," and becoming princes in all nations? Who made the most glorious apostle of the first and fiercest persecutor? Was it not He who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," and is "gracious unto whom he will be gracious?" And it is laid down as a universal rule, that no man hath any thing in this kind but what he hath freely received; nor doth any man make himself to differ from others, 1 Cor. 4:7. For, 1. God lays the foundation of all spiritual differences among men in his sovereign decree of eternal election, Rom. 9:11–16; Eph. 1:4. And among them that are chosen, he calleth them when and how he pleaseth, both unto grace and employment or work. And, 2. As to grace, gifts,

and spiritual endowments, the Holy Spirit "divideth unto every man as he will," 1 Cor. 12:11. Let every one, then, be contented with his lot and condition; let every one endeavour to fill up the place and state wherein he is fixed, and as he is called to abide with God. Let God be owned in all his gifts and graces; and our souls be humbled in what we come short of others; and the sovereignty of grace admired, in all the different effects of it which we behold.

Obs. III. Whereas even Abraham himself gave the tenth of all to Melchisedec, we may observe, that the highest privilege exempts not any from the obligation unto and performance of the meanest duty.—Notwithstanding all those advantages and privileges which Abraham was possessed of, on the account whereof he was mighty in his own days, and almost adored by his posterity, yet when the meanest duty was presented unto him, he readily complied with it. Nor ought it to be otherwise with any. For, 1. Privilege is less than duty. A man may have the greatest privileges and yet be rejected; but the least sincere duty shall not be unrewarded: for duty indeed is our chiefest honour and advantage. And for men to pretend to such advancements in the church of God, as that they should be exempted thereby from the ordinary labour of the ministry, is horrid pride and ingratitude. But when spiritual or ecclesiastical privileges are pretended to countenance men in a life or course of idleness, sloth, pleasure, sensuality, or worldliness in any kind, it is a crime that, it may be, we as yet want a name to express. Wherefore, 2. Whatever is pretended, that is no privilege which either exempts a man from or hinders him in and unto the performance of any duty whatever. It is such a privilege as, being well improved, will send men to hell. It will prove no otherwise, let the pretence be what it will. For, 3. There are indeed but two ends of any privileges whereof in this world we may be made partakers; whereof the first is to enable us unto duty, and the other is to encourage us thereunto. Hereunto we may add, that when any are highly exalted in privileges, so that they have an advantage thereby to give an eminent example unto others in the performance of their duties, when these ends are not pursued, all privileges, promotions, dignities, exaltations, are snares, and tend unto the ruin of men's souls. There are things still of this nature, both as unto whole churches and as unto particular persons. Some churches are like Capernaum as to the outward means of grace,—as it were lifted up to heaven. Let them take heed of Capernaum's judgment, in being brought down as low as hell for their abuse of them, or negligence in their improvement. Some persons have eminent endowments; and if they are not eminent in service, they will prove to their disadvantage: yea, the highest

privileges should make men ready to condescend unto the meanest duties. This is that which our Lord Jesus Christ so signally instructed his disciples in, when he himself washed their feet, and taught them the same duty towards the meanest of his disciples, John 13:11–17.

Obs. IV. Opportunities for duty, which render it beautiful, ought diligently to be embraced.—So did Abraham as unto this duty, upon his meeting of Melchisedec. Hence the performance of this duty became so renowned, and was of the use whereunto it is here applied by our apostle. It is season that gives every thing its beauty. And omission of seasons, or tergiversations under them, are evidences of a heart much under the power of corrupt lusts or unbelief.

Obs. V. When the instituted use of consecrated things ceaseth, the things themselves cease to be sacred or of esteem.—For what became of all these dedicated things after the death of Melchisedec? They were no more sacred, the actual administration of his typical priesthood ceasing. Of what use was the brazen serpent, after it was taken from the pole whereon it was lifted up by God's appointment? or of what use would the lifting of it up be, when it was not under an express command? We know it proved a snare, a means of idolatry, and that was all. God's institution is the foundation and warranty of all consecration. All the men in the world cannot really consecrate or dedicate any thing, but by virtue of divine appointment. And this appointment of God respected always a limited use, beyond which nothing was sacred. And every thing kept beyond its appointment is like manna so kept; "it breeds worms and stinketh." These things are manifest, from the consideration of all things that God ever accepted or dedicated in the church. But ignorance of them is that which hath filled the world with horrid superstition. How many things have we had made sacred which never had warranty from any institution of God!—monasteries, abbeys, persons, and lands, altars, bells, utensils, with other things of the like nature very many; which, whatever use they are of, yet all the men in the world cannot make them sacred. And the extending of the sacredness of dedicated things beyond their use hath had a no less pernicious event. Hence was the useless reservation of the consecrated bread after the sacrament, and afterwards the idolatrous worship of it. But these things are here occasionally only mentioned. The apostle adds, in the confirmation of his argument,—

Ver. 5.—And verily they that are the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.

There is in these words an illustration and confirmation of the present argument, proving the preference of Melchisedec above Abraham, from his giving the tithe or tenth of all unto him, and consequently receiving the blessing from him. And this is taken from what was determined in the law and acknowledged among the Hebrews; with which kind of arguments the apostle doth principally press them in the whole epistle, as we have showed on many occasions. Now this is, that the priests, who received tithes by the law, were superior in dignity and honour unto the people from whom they did receive them. And this was only declared in the law, for the foundation of it was in the light of nature, as the apostle expressly intimates in the instance of benediction afterwards.

There are considerable in the words, 1. The introduction of this new confirmation of his foregoing argument. 2. A description of the persons in whom he instanceth. 3. The action ascribed unto them, with its limitation. And, 4. The qualification of the persons on whom their power was exercised:—

Καὶ οἱ μέν. First, The introduction of his reasoning herein is in these words, Καὶ οἱ μέν. The connection in the conjunction is plain; yet not a reason is given of what was spoken before, but a continuation of the same argument with further proof is intended. And he adds the note of observation, μέν, "verily;" as if he had said, 'As to this matter of tithing, and what may thence justly be inferred as to dignity and pre-eminence, you may consider how it was under the law; and what I propose unto you, you will there find directly confirmed.' It is a great advantage, to press them with whom we have to do from their own principles.

Οἱ ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Λευὶ, ἱερατείαν λαμβάνοντες. Secondly, The description of the persons in whom he instanceth is in these words. "The sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood." It was the priests directly whom he intended, or the sons of Aaron; and he might have so expressed it, 'the priests according to the law.' But he varieth his expression for sundry reasons that appear in the context:—

1. Because all the Levites did receive tithes by the law, yea, tithes in the first place were paid unto them in common. But because their dignity among the people was less conspicuous than that of the priests, and the design of the apostle is not merely to argue from the giving of tithes unto any, but the giving of them unto them as priests, as Abraham gave tithes of all unto Melchisedec as priest of the most high God, he thus expresseth it, "The sons of Levi, who

receive the office of the priesthood." For though all the sons of Levi received tithes, yet all of them did not receive the priesthood; with which sort of persons alone he was concerned.

2. He doth thus express it to introduce the mention of Levi, whom he was afterwards to mention on the same occasion, and to lay the weight of him and the whole tribe under the same argument.

3. He minds them, by the way, of another dignity of the priesthood, in that not all the posterity of Abraham, no, nor yet of Levi, were partakers thereof, but it was a privilege granted only to one part of them, even the family of Aaron. And these are the persons in whom he makes his instance. Thus God distributes dignity and pre-eminence in the church as he pleaseth. Not all the posterity of Abraham, but only those of Levi, were set apart to receive tithes; and not all the posterity of Levi, but only the family of Aaron, did receive the priesthood. And this order of his sovereign pleasure God required of them all to submit unto and acquiesce in, Numb. 16:9, 10. And it is a dangerous thing, out of envy, pride, or emulation, to transgress the bounds of dignity and office that God hath prescribed; as we may see in the instance of Korah. For every man to be contented with the station which God hath fixed him unto by rule and providence, is his safety and honour. What God calleth and disposeth men unto, therein are they to abide, and to that are they to attend. It was new to the people, to set the whole tribe of Levi, taken into a particular sacred condition, to attend for ever on the worship of God; yet therein they acquiesced. But when the priests were taken out of the Levites, and exalted above them, some of them murmured at it, and stirred up the congregation against Aaron, as though he took too much upon him, and deprived the congregation of their liberty, which yet was all holy. The end of this sedition was known, notwithstanding the specious pretence of it.

Ἐντολὴν ἐ̓χουσιν ἀποδεκατοῦν τὸν λαὸν, κατὰ τὸν νόμον. Thirdly, What is ascribed unto these persons ensues in the words, "Have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law." They had "a command to take tithes;" and they were to do it "according to the law:" the one was their warranty, and the other their rule; for so are the "commandment" and the "law" here to be distinguished.

1. They had a "commandment to take tithes;"—that is, there was a command or institution enabling them so to do; for the command in the first place respected the people, making it their duty to pay all their tithes unto the

Levites. God did first take the tithe to be his peculiar portion; and thereby alienated it from the people, that they had no propriety in it. "And all the tithe of the land," saith he, "is the LORD'S," Lev. 27:30. Hence those that withheld their tithes are said to "rob God," Mal. 3:8. And wherever it can be manifested that God hath, by an institution of his own, taken the whole tithes of any place into his own possession, there for any to detain them for their own use, it is sacrilege, and not else. But God having thus in the land of Canaan taken them into his own propriety, he commanded the people to pay them to the priests. This command given unto the people to pay them, was a command to the priests to receive them; for what men have a right to do in the church, by God's institution, that they have a command to do. The right of the priests unto tithing was such, as that it was not at all their liberty to forego it at their pleasure; yea, it was their sin so to have done. The command which obliged others to pay them, obliged them to receive them. And they who on slight pretences do forego what is due to them with respect unto their office, will on as slight, when occasion serves, neglect what is due from them on the same account. And this fell out frequently with the priests of old; they neglected their wages, that they might have countenance in the neglect of their work. And we may hence observe, that,—

Obs. VI. Rule, institution, and command, without regard unto unrequired humility, or pleas of greater zeal and self-denial, unless in evident and cogent circumstances, are the best preservatives of order and duty in the church.—They are so in every kind, especially in the disposal of earthly things, such as the maintenance of the officers of the church doth consist in. Neither the people's pretence of poverty, nor the ministers' pretence of humility, will regulate this matter as it ought to be. But as it is the people's duty to provide for them, wherein they exercise grace and obedience towards Jesus Christ; so it is the ministers' duty cheerfully to receive what is their due by the appointment of Christ, for they have a command so to do. But whereas they are not many who are apt to transgress on this hand, we shall not need further to press this consideration. But we may add,—

Obs. VII. As it is the duty of those who are employed in sacred ministrations to receive what the Lord Christ hath appointed for their supportment, and in the way of his appointment, so it is likewise, without trouble, solicitousness, or complaint, to acquiesce therein.—So was it with the priests of old, they were to receive their portion, and to acquiesce in their portion; the neglect of which duty was the sin of the sons of Eli. We take it for granted that the way of

maintenance is changed as to the ministers of holy things under the new testament. That the law of maintenance is taken away is the highest folly to imagine, it being so expressly asserted by our Saviour himself and his apostle, Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9. But here it is thought lies the disadvantage, that whereas the priests under the old testament had a certain portion which was legally due unto them, and they might demand it as their own, it is now referred unto the voluntary contribution of them that have the benefit and advantage of their labour. Now whereas they oftentimes, yea, for the most part, are negligent in their duty, and, through love of the present world, very scanty and backward in their contributions, ministers cannot be supported in their work in any measure proportionable unto what the priests were of old. Besides, it should seem unworthy a minister of the gospel, who ought to be had in esteem, and is declared by the apostle to be "worthy of double honour," to depend on the will, and as it were charity of the people, many of them, it may be, poor and low themselves. And these things have taken such impression on the minds of the most of them that are called ministers, as that, with the help of the secular power, they have wisely provided a new way and law of legal tithing for their subsistence, with a notable overplus of other good ecclesiastical lands and revenues: which practice I shall neither justify nor condemn, let the effects of it and the day declare it. Only I say, that the institution of Christ before mentioned stands in no need of this invention or supply to safeguard it from these objections. For,—

(1.) The change made in the way of maintenance, pretended so disadvantageous unto ministers of the gospel, is no other but a part of that universal alteration, wherein carnal things are turned into those that are more spiritual, which was made by the bringing in of the kingdom of Christ. And if ministers may complain that they have by the gospel lost the former allotment of sacred officers in tithes, the people may as well complain that they have no inheritances in the land of Canaan. But he is unworthy the name of a minister of the gospel, who is not satisfied with what our Lord hath ordained in every kind. And as for those who indeed think better of what was of use in Judaism or heathenism than what is warranted by the gospel, I shall not debate the matter with them. Wherefore as yet I judge, that the taking of the maintenance of sacred ministers from the law of a carnal commandment enforcing of it, and charging it on the grace and duty of the church, is a perfective alteration, becoming the spirituality and glory of the kingdom of Christ. For,—

(2.) This way is the most honourable way, and that which casts the greatest respect upon them. Even the princes and rulers of the world have their revenue and supportment from the substance of the people. Now I would only ask, whether it would not be more honourable that the people should willingly and of their own accord bring in their contribution, than merely pay it under the compulsion of a law? For in this latter way, no man knoweth whether they have the least true honour for their ruler or regard unto his office; but if it might be done in the former, all the world must take notice what reverence, regard, and honour they have for the person and dignity of their prince. It is true, generally the men of the world are such lovers of themselves, and so little concerned in public good, that if they were left absolutely at liberty in this matter, their governors might be defrauded of their right, and the ends of government be disappointed; wherefore, in all countries provision is made by law for the payment of that tribute which yet without law is due. But whether it be meet to bring this order into the church or no, I much question. If it be so, possibly it may secure the revenue of ministers, but it will not increase their honour. For however men may please themselves with outward appearances of things, true honour consists in that respect and reverence which others pay them in their minds and hearts. Now when this is such, and that on the account of duty, that men will freely contribute unto our supportment, I know no more honourable subsistence in the world. 'What!' will some say, 'to depend on the will and love of the people?—there is nothing more base and unworthy!' Yea, but what if all the honour that Jesus Christ himself hath, or accepts from his people, proceeds from their wills and affections? Mohammed, indeed, who knew well enough that neither honour, respect, nor obedience was due unto him, and that he could no way recompense what should be done towards him in that kind, provided that men should be brought in subjection unto his name by fire and sword. But our Lord Jesus Christ despiseth all honour, all obedience and respect, that are not voluntary and free, and which do not proceed from the wills of men. And shall his servants in the work of the gospel suppose themselves debased, to receive respect and honour from the same principle? Well, therefore, because our apostle tells us that "our Lord hath ordained that those who preach the gospel shall live on the gospel," and all obedience unto his ordinances and institutions must be voluntary, if ministers are ashamed, and esteem it unworthy of them, to receive what is so contributed in a way of voluntary obedience, let them try if they can prevail with themselves to receive it so for Him, and in his name, who is not ashamed to receive it, no, if it be only a cup of

cold water, so it come from a free and willing mind, when he despiseth the revenue of the whole world upon compulsion. If they will not do so, their best way is to leave his service, and take up with that which is more honourable. For my part, I do judge that the way of maintenance of ministers by voluntary benevolence, in a way of duty and obedience unto Christ, though it be not likely the most plentiful, is yet the most honourable of all others. And of this judgment I shall be, until I am convinced of two things: [1.] That true honour doth not consist in the respect and regard of the minds of men unto the real worth and usefulness of those who are honoured, but in outward ceremonies and forced works of regard. [2.] That it is not the duty which every church owes to Jesus Christ, to maintain those who labour in the word and doctrine, according to their ability; or that it is any gospel-duty which is influenced by force or compulsion.

(3.) It must be acknowledged, that this way of voluntary contribution is not like to afford matter for that grandeur and secular greatness, those ample revenues, those provisions for ease, wealth, and worldly honour, which some think necessary in this case. But yet, however, it must be granted, that all those large possessions and dominions which some now enjoy under the name of church-revenues, were originally voluntary grants and contributions. For it will not be said that the clergy got them by force of arms, or by fraud, nor were they their patrimonial inheritance. But yet I fear there were some undue artifices used to induce men unto such donations and ecclesiastical endowments, and somewhat more of merit fixed thereon than truth will allow, besides a compensation therein for what might be undergone in purgatory, when men were gone out of the world. However, the thing itself in its whole kind, that men out of their substance and revenue should design a portion unto the service of the church, is not to be condemned. But it proved mischievous and fatal, when those who received what was so given, being unmeasurably covetous and worldly, fixed no bounds unto the charity or superstition of men in this kind, until they had overrun the world with their gains. And not only so, but whereas there was no pretence of use of such great revenues, in any way pretended to be of divine appointment, they were forced to invent and find out ways innumerable, in abbeys, monasteries, cloisters, to be repositories of their overflowing treasure and revenues. But when God had appointed to build his tabernacle of the free-will offerings of the people (a type of the gospel-church), when there was provision enough of materials brought in, the liberality of the people was restrained by proclamation, and some perhaps grieved that their

offerings were not received, Exod. 36:5, 6. Through want of this care to put a stop unto the devotions of men in these donations, according unto a just measure of the church's necessary use, the bounds whereof were broken up and left invisible, by the pride, ambition, covetousness, and craft of the clergy, the whole world ran into superstition and confusion. At present, I grant that the way which the gospel appoints is not likely to make provision for pomp, grandeur, wealth, revenues, and inheritances, unto them that rely upon it. Nor do I think that if the present establishment of a superfluous revenue unto the clergy were removed, the world itself would in haste run into the same state again. Wherefore, those who judge these things necessary and desirable, must be permitted, as far as I know, to betake themselves unto the advantage the world will afford; it is acknowledged that the gospel hath made no provision of them.

(4.) It is indeed supposed, unto the disadvantage of this way, that by means thereof ministers do become obnoxious unto the people, do depend upon them, and so cannot deal so uprightly and sincerely with their consciences as they ought to do, lest they incur their displeasure, wherein they are too much concerned. It were easy to manifest with how many more and greater inconveniencies the other way is attended, were we now comparing of them. And in truth it is a vain thing to look for or expect any such order and disposal of these things, as should administer no occasion for the wisdom and graces of those concerned; nor would such a way be at all useful. I say, therefore, that God hath established mutual duty to be the rule and measure of all things between ministers and people. Hereunto it is their wisdom and grace to attend, leaving the success unto God. And a minister may easily conclude, that seeing his whole supportment in earthly things, with respect unto his ministry, depends on the command of God on the account of the discharge of his duty, if he have respect thereunto in his work, or so far as it is lawful for him to have, that the more sincere and upright he is therein, the more assured will his supportment be. And he who is enabled to give up himself unto the work of the ministry in a due manner, considering the nature of that work, and what he shall assuredly meet withal in its discharge, is not in much danger of being greatly moved with this pitiful consideration of displeasing this or that man in the discharge of his duty.

(5.) It is further pleaded, that these things were tolerable at the first entrance and beginning of Christianity, when the zeal, love, and liberality of its professors, did sufficiently stir them up unto an abundant discharge of their duty; but now the whole body of them is degenerate from their pristine faith and love: coldness and indifferency in the things of their eternal concernment,

with love of self and this present evil world, do so prevail in them all, as that, if things were left unto their wills and sense of duty, there would quickly be an end of all ministry, for want of maintenance. This is of all others the most cogent argument in this case, and that which prevails with many good and sober men utterly to decry the way of ministers' maintenance by a voluntary contribution. I shall briefly give my thoughts concerning it, and so return from this digression. And I say,—

[1.] I do not condemn any provision that is made by good, wholesome, and righteous laws among men, for this end and purpose, provided it be such as is accommodated unto the furtherance of the work itself. Such provision as in its own nature is a snare and temptation, inclining men unto pride, ambition, luxury, distance from, and elation above the meanest of the sheep or lambs of Christ, or as it were requiring a worldly grandeur and secular pomp in their course of life, must plead for itself as it is able. But such as may comfortably support, encourage, and help men in this work and discharge of their duty, being made without the wrong of others, is doubtless to be approved. Yea, if, in this degeneracy of Christianity under which we suffer, any shall, out of love and obedience unto the gospel, set apart any portion of their estates, and settle it unto the service of the church in the maintenance of the ministry, it is a good work, which, if done in faith, will be accepted.

[2.] Let those who are true disciples indeed know, that it is greatly incumbent on them to roll away that reproach which is cast upon the institutions of Christ by the miscarriages of the generality of Christians. He hath "ordained that those who preach the gospel shall live on the gospel." And the way whereby he hath prescribed this to be effected is, that those who are his disciples should, in obedience unto his command, supply them with temporals by whom spirituals are dispensed unto them. If this be not done, a reproach is cast upon his institutions, as insufficient unto the end for which they were designed. It is therefore incumbent on all who have any true zeal for the glory and honour of Christ, to manifest their exemplary obedience and fruitfulness in this matter; whereby it may appear that it is not any defect in the appointment of Christ, but the stubborn disobedience and unbelief of men, that is the cause of any disorder.

[3.] Seeing there is such a degeneracy among Christians, as that they will not be wrought upon unto a voluntary discharge of their duty in this matter, it may be inquired what hath been the cause, or at least the principal occasion thereof. Now if this should be found and appear to be, the coldness, remissness, neglect,

ignorance, sloth, ambition, and worldliness, of those who have been their guides and leaders, their officers and ministers, in most ages, it will evince how little reason some have to complain that the people are backward and negligent in the discharge of their duty. And if it be true, as indeed it is, that the care of religion, that it be preserved thrive, and flourish, not only in themselves but in the whole church, has been committed unto those persons, there can be no such apostasy as is complained of among the people, but that the guilt of it will lie at their doors. And if it be so, it is to be inquired whether it be the duty of ministers absolutely to comply with them in their degeneration, and suffer them to live in the neglect of their duty in this matter, only providing for themselves some other way; or whether they ought not rather by all ways and means to endeavour their recovery into their pristine condition. If it be said, that whatever men pretend, yet it is a thing impossible, to work the people into a due discharge of their duty in this matter,—I grant it is, whilst that is only or principally intended. But if men would not consider themselves or their interest in the first place, but really endeavour their recovery unto faith, love, obedience, and holiness, and that by their own example as well as teaching, it may well be hoped that this duty would revive again in the company of others; for it is certain it will never stand alone by itself. But we must proceed with our apostle.

Κατά τὸν νόμον. 2. Those sons of Levi who obtained the priesthood "received tithes according to the law;" that is, as the matter or manner of tithing was determined by the law. For by "tithes" I understand that whole portion which, by God's order and command, belonged unto the priests; and this in all the concerns of it was determined by the law. What, when, how, of whom, all was expressly established by law. So they received tithes according to the law,—in the order, way and manner therein determined; for it is God's law and appointment that gives boundaries and measures unto all duties. What is done according unto them is straight, right, and acceptable; whatever is otherwise, however it may please our own wisdom or reason, is crooked, froward, perverse, and rejected of God.

But there is an objection that this assertion of the apostle seems liable unto, which we must take notice of in our passage. For whereas he affirms that "the Levites who received the office of the priesthood took tithes of their brethren," it is evident, from the first grant and institution of tithing, that the Levites who were not priests were the first who immediately received them of the people. See Num. 18:21–24.

Ans. (1.) By "tithes" the whole consecrated portion according unto the law is intended, as we said before. Hereof the portion allotted unto the priests out of various offerings or sacrifices was no small part, wherein the Levites had no interest, but they belonged and were delivered immediately unto the priests. (2.) The Levites themselves were given unto the priests, for their service in and about holy things, Num. 3:9. Whatever afterwards was given unto the Levites, it was so with reference unto the supportment of the priesthood in due order. The tithes, therefore, that were paid to the Levites were in the original grant of all to the priests. (3.) The priests tithed the whole people in that tenth of all which they received of the Levites; and that being given unto them, what remained in the possession of the Levites themselves came, as all other clean things, to be used promiscuously, Num. 18:26–32.

Τοῦτ᾽ ἐστι τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτῶν. Fourthly, The privilege of the priests in taking the tenth of all is amplified by the consideration of the persons from whom they took them. Now these were not strangers or foreigners, but their own brethren. And these also were so their brethren as that they had a right unto, and were partakers of the same original privileges with themselves; which did not exempt them from the duty of paying tithes of all unto them: "Took tithes of their brethren, though they came out of the loins of Abraham." Abraham first received the promises, and was an equal common spring of privileges to his whole posterity. The priests were not more children of Abraham than the people were. The whole people, therefore, being so, and thereby equally interested in all the privileges of Abraham, or the church of believers, it is manifest how great the honour and pre-eminence of the priests were, in that they took tithes of them all. And this the apostle declares, to strengthen his argument for the greatness and excellency of Melchisedec, in that he received tithes of Abraham himself. And we may learn,—

Obs. VIII. That it is God's prerogative to give dignity and pre-eminence in the church among them which are otherwise equal; which is to be acquiesced in.—Our common vocation by the word states us all equally in the same privilege, as all the children of Abraham were in that respect in the same condition; but in this common state God makes, by his prerogative, a threefold difference among believers; as to grace, as to gifts, as to office. For,—

1. Although all true believers have the same grace in the kind thereof, yet some much excel others in the degrees and exercise of it. As one star differeth from another, that is, excelleth another, in glory, so here one saint excelleth

another in grace. This, both the examples of the Scripture and the experience of all ages of the church do testify. And this dependeth on the sovereign pleasure of God. As he is "gracious unto whom he will be gracious," so when, and how, and in what measure he pleaseth. Some shall have grace sooner than others, and some that which is more eminent than others have: only, he that hath least shall have no lack, as to making of him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and he that hath most hath no more than he shall find need of and exercise for. But so it is, some God will have as pillars in his house, and some are but as bruised reeds. And every one's duty it is for himself, in his place and condition, to comply with the will of God herein. (1.) Let not the weak, the feeble of the flock, those who either really are so or in their own apprehensions, complain or faint. For, [1.] There is no man in the world that hath so little grace, who hath any, but he hath more than he ever deserved; as none hath so much, as that any dram of it is of his own earning. And as he who hath nothing but what he hath freely received, hath nothing to boast of; so he who hath that which he never deserved, hath no reason to complain. [2.] It is the pleasure of God it should be so. If it be his will to keep us spiritually poor, so we are thereby kept humble, we shall be no losers. I say not this, as though any one who hath but a little grace, or apprehends himself to have so, should, on the pretence that such is the will of God concerning him and his condition, neglect the most earnest endeavour after more,—which would be a shrewd evidence that he hath none at all; but that those who, in a diligent use of means for growth and improvement, cannot yet arrive unto such an increase, such an addition of one grace unto another, as that their profiting may be manifest (which falls out on several occasions), may find relief in the sovereign pleasure of God to keep them in their low condition. [3.] They may do well to consider, that indeed there is a great deal of glory in the least of true grace. Though there be not so much as in more grace, yet there is more than in all things under the sun besides. No man hath so little grace, who hath any, as that he is ever able to set a sufficient price upon it, or to be thankful enough for it. [4.] There is, indeed, so much spoken in the Scripture concerning the love, care, compassion, and tenderness of our Lord Jesus Christ, towards the weak, the sick, the diseased of his flock, that on some accounts the state of those humble souls who have yet received but little grace seems to be most safe and desirable, Isa. 40:11. Let not such, therefore, complain; it is God alone who is the author of this difference between them and others. And on the same grounds, (2.) Those who are strong, who have much grace, ought not, [1.] To boast or be lifted up; for, as we observed before, they

have nothing but what they have freely received. Yea, it is very suspicious that what any one boasteth of is not grace; for it is the nature of all true grace to exclude all boasting. He that, by comparing himself with others, finds any other issue in his thoughts, but either to admire sovereign grace or to judge himself beneath them, is in an ill condition, or at least in an ill frame. [2.] Nor to trust unto what they have received. There is none hath so much grace as not every moment to need supplies of more. And he who, like Peter, trusteth unto that wherein he is above others, will one way or other be brought down beneath them all. [3.] Let such be greatly fruitful, or this appearance of much grace will issue in much darkness.

2. God dealeth thus with men as to spiritual gifts. Among those who are called, the Spirit divideth unto every one even as he will. Unto one he giveth five talents, unto another two, and to a third but one. And this diversity, depending merely on God's sovereignty, is visible in all churches. And as this tends in itself unto their beauty and edification, so there may be an abuse of it unto their disadvantage; for besides those disorders which the apostle declares to have ensued, particularly in the church of Corinth, upon the undue use and exercise of spiritual gifts, there are sundry evils which may befall particular persons by reason of them, if their original and end be not duly attended unto. For, (1.) Those who have received these spiritual gifts in any eminent manner may be apt to be lifted up with good conceits of themselves, and even to despise their brethren who come behind them therein. This evil was openly prevalent in the church of Corinth. (2.) Among those who have received them in some equality, or would be thought so to have done, emulations, and perhaps strifes thereon, are apt to ensue. One cannot well bear that the gift of another should find more acceptance, or be better esteemed than his own; and another may be apt to extend himself beyond his due line and measure, because of them. And, (3.) Those who have received them in the lowest degree may be apt to despond, and refuse to trade with what they have, because their stock is inferior unto their neighbours.' But what is all this to us? May not God do what he will with his own? If God will have some of the sons of Abraham to pay tithes, and some to receive them, is there any ground of complaint? Unto him that hath the most eminent gifts, God hath given of his own, and not of ours; he hath taken nothing from us to endue him withal, but supplied him out of his own stores. Whoever, therefore, is unduly exalted with them, or envies because of them, he despiseth the prerogative of God, and contends with him that is mighty.

3. God distinguisheth persons with respect unto office. He makes, and so accounts, whom he will faithful, and puts them into the ministry. This of old Korah repined against. And there are not a few who free themselves from envy at the ministry, by endeavouring to bring it down into contempt. But the office is honourable; and so are they by whom it is discharged in a due manner. And it is the prerogative of God to call whom he pleaseth thereunto. And there is no greater usurpation therein than the constitution of ministers by the laws, rules, and authority of men. For any to set up such in office as he hath not gifted for it, nor called unto it, is to sit in the temple of God, and to show themselves to be God. We may also hence observe, that,—

Obs. IX. No privilege can exempt persons from subjection unto any of God's institutions, though they were of the loins of Abraham. Yet,—

Hebrews 7: 6–10

In the five following verses the apostle pursues and concludes that part of his argument, from the consideration of Melchisedec, which concerned the greatness and glory of Him who was represented by him, and his pre-eminence above the Levitical priests. For if Melchisedec, who was but a type of him, was in his own person in so many instances more excellent than they, how much more must He be esteemed to be above them who was represented by him? for he whom another is appointed to represent, must be more glorious than he by whom he is represented. This part of his argument the apostle concludes in these verses, and thence proceeds unto another great inference and deduction from what he had taught concerning this Melchisedec. And this was that which struck into the heart of that controversy which he had in hand, namely, that the Levitical priesthood must necessarily cease upon the introduction of that better priesthood which was fore-signified by that of Melchisedec. And these things, whatsoever sense we now have of them, were those on which the salvation or damnation of these Hebrews did absolutely depend. For unless they were prevailed on to forego that priesthood which was now abolished, and to betake themselves alone unto that more excellent one which was then introduced, they must unavoidably perish; as, accordingly, on this very account it fell out with the generality of that people, their posterity persisting in the same unbelief unto this day. And that which God made the crisis of the life or death of that church and people, ought to be diligently weighed and considered by us. It may be, some find not themselves much concerned in this laborious, accurate dispute of the apostle, wherein so much occurs about pedigrees, priests,

and tithes, which they think belongs not unto them. But let them remember, that in that great day of taking down the whole fabric of Mosaical worship, and the abolition of the covenant of Sinai, the life or death of that ancient church, the posterity of Abraham, the friend of God, to whom until this season an enclosure was made of all spiritual privileges, Rom. 9:4, depended upon their receiving or rejecting of the truth here contended for. And God in like manner doth oftentimes single out especial truths for the trial of the faith and obedience of the church in especial seasons. And when he doth so, there is ever after an especial veneration due unto them. But to return:—

Upon the supposition that the Levitical priests did receive tithes as well as Melchisedec, wherein, they were equal; and that they received tithes of their brethren, the posterity of Abraham, which was their especial prerogative and dignity; he yet proveth, by four arguments, that the greatness he had assigned unto Melchisedec, and his pre-eminence above them, was no more than was due unto him. And the first of these is taken from the consideration of his person from whom he received tithes, verse 6; the second, from the action of benediction which accompanied his receiving of tithes, verse 7; the third, from the condition and state of his own person, compared with all those who received tithes according to the law, verse 8; and the fourth, from that which determines the whole question, namely, that Levi himself, and so, consequently, all the whole race of priests that sprang from his loins, did thus pay tithes unto him, verses 9, 10.

Hebrews 7: 6

Ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν δεδεκάτωκε τὸν Ἀβραὰμ, καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα τὰς ἐπαγγελίας εὐλόγηκε.

The Ethiopic translation omits these words, Ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν δεδεκάτωκε τὸν Ἀβραάμ. He takes up the name "Abraham" in the foregoing verse, "who came forth out of the loins of Abraham;" and adds unto them what follows in this, "who received the promises;" possibly deceived by a maimed transcript of the original.

Μὴ γενεαλογούμενος. Syr. הַנָּא דִּין דְּלָא כְתִיב בְּשַׁיְבַתְהוֹן "he who is not written in the genealogies:" properly enough; for the apostle speaks of the genealogies that were written and on record in the book of Genesis, wherein there is none of Melchisedec; and it is the writing by divine inspiration that his argument is founded on. Answ. "Genealogisatus," "genealogized." "Is cujus genus non

recensetur ex illis," "whose stock is not reckoned from them;" or as Beza, "ad illos non refertur." Vulg. Lat., "cujus generatio non annumeratur in eis;" that is, as the Rhemists, "he whose generation is not numbered among them." Ours, "whose descent is not counted from them;" putting "pedigree" in the margin. Γενεαλογούμενος is, "is cujus ortus," "generatio," "nativitas recensetur;" whose "original," "nativity," "stock, "race, is reckoned up," or "recorded."

Ἐξ αὐτῶν, "from them," "from among them." Vulg. Lat., "in eis," for "inter eos," "among them;" "whose generation is not numbered among them." The meaning is, he was not of their stock or race; he sprang not of them, nor arose from among them.

Δεδεκάτωκε, "decimas tulit," "sumpsit," "exegit," "accepit," "decimavit." Δεκατεύω is "decimo," or "decimam partem excerpo;" "to take out the tenth part:" Τὰ τῶν πολεμίων δεκατεύσειν εὐξάμενος τότε, Plut. in Camillo; "ex spoliis hostium decimas excerpere." Δεκατόω, with an accusative case, as here, is "to receive tithes of any;" and ἀποδεκατόω, in the same construction, is of the same signification: verse 5, Ἀποδεκατοῦν τὸν λαόν. But absolutely it signifies "to pay tithes," or, "to give tithes," not to receive them; Luke 18:12, Ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι—"I tithe all that I possess;" that is, give tithe out of it.

Ver. 6.—But he whose descent is not reckoned from them, received tithes from Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

A description there is in these words of Melchisedec, by a negation of a certain respect, useful to be observed unto the design of the apostle; and then an assertion upon a supposition thereof.

Μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν. 1. He was a person whose descent, pedigree, nativity, traduction of stock and lineage, was not reckoned from among them. He had before observed absolutely, that he was not at all genealogized: verse 3, ἀγενεαλόγητος,—"without descent." And how this was necessary, to shadow out the eternity of the priesthood of Christ, we have declared. For if he had had any genealogy, or had stood in need thereof, it had been to show from whom he derived his priesthood, and unto whom it was transmitted; whereas he had no such circumstances, nor was to have, as to the end of his call and office. Hence it follows, in particular, that he could not derive his descent from Levi. Morally he could not, because so he had none at all; and naturally he could not, for in his days Levi was only yet in the loins of Abraham: so that in no respect he could descend from him. But the apostle hath a peculiar intention in this verse; for whereas he designed to prove the greatness of Melchisedec from his receiving

tithes, he intends here to declare on what right and title he did so. For there were but two ways whereby any one did or might take tithes of any: (1.) By virtue of the law, or institution of God in the law. This way none could do so but he who legally derived his descent from Levi. (2.) By virtue of some especial grant or personal privilege, either before or above the law. Whereas, therefore, Melchisedec, as is here declared, had no interest in the former, it must be with respect unto the latter that he had this right; which argues his dignity. So God may, and doth sometimes, communicate of his favour and privileges thereby, by especial exemption, and not by an ordinary rule or constitution. I do not at all know, nor can it be proved, that God is now, by his word, or law, or constitution, obliged to give no ministry unto the church but by virtue of an orderly outward call according to the rule. It is true, we are obliged to keep ourselves unto the rule and law in the call of ministers, so far as we are able; but whether God hath bound himself unto that order, I very much question. Yea, when there is any great and signal work to be done in the church,—it may be, such as the church cannot or will not call any unto, even such a reformation of persons as may prove a dissolution of its constitution,—if God raise, gift, and providentially call, any unto that work, assisting them in it, I should not doubt of the lawfulness of their ministry, as granted unto them by especial privilege, though not communicated by external rule and order. It is good, ordinarily, to be genealogized into the ministry by established rule; but God can, by virtue of his own sovereignty, grant this privilege unto whom he pleaseth. And let not any imagine that such a supposition must needs immediately open a door unto confusion; for there are invariable rules to try men and their ministry by at all times, whether they are sent of God or no. The doctrine which they teach, the ends which they promote, the lives which they lead, the circumstances of the seasons wherein they appear, will sufficiently manifest whence such teachers are.

2. Having thus described Melchisedec, and manifested on what account the things mentioned were ascribed or did belong unto him, he mentions the things themselves, which were two: (1.) That he "received tithes of Abraham." (2.) That "he blessed him." In both which he demonstrates his greatness and dignity: (1.) By the consideration of the person of whom he received tithes; it was Abraham himself. (2.) By an especial circumstance of Abraham; it was "he who had received the promises," from whence the whole church of Israel claimed their privileges:—

Δεδεκάτωκε τὸν Ἀβραάμ. (1.) He "received tithes of Abraham." The Levitical priests received tithes of those who came out of the loins of Abraham; which was an evidence of their dignity by God's appointment: but he received them of Abraham himself; which evidently declares his superiority above them, as also herein above Abraham himself. And the apostle, by insisting on these things so particularly, shows, [1.] How difficult a matter it is to dispossess the minds of men of those things which they have long trusted unto, and boasted of. It is plain, from the Gospel throughout, that all the Jews looked on this as their great privilege and advantage, that they were the posterity of Abraham: whom they conceived on all accounts the greatest and most honourable person that ever was in the world. Now, although there was much herein, yet when they began to abuse it, and trust unto it, it was necessary that their confidence should be abated and taken down. But so difficult a matter was this to effect, as that the apostle applies every argument unto it that hath a real force and evidence in it, especially such things as they had not before considered; as it is plain they were utterly ignorant in the instructive part of this story of Melchisedec. And we see, in like manner, when men are possessed with an inveterate conceit of their being "the church," and having all the privileges of it enclosed unto them, although they have long since forfeited openly all right thereunto, how difficult a thing it is to dispossess their minds of that pleasing presumption. [2.] That every particle of divine truth is instructive and argumentative, when it is rightly used and improved. Hence the apostle presseth all the circumstances of this story, from every one of them giving light and evidence unto the great truth which he sought to confirm.

Τὸν ἐ̓χοντα τὰς ἐπαγγελίας. (2.) That it might yet further appear how great Melchisedec was, who received tithes of Abraham, he declares who Abraham was, in an instance of his great and especial privilege. It was he who "had the promises." This he singles out as the greatest privilege and honour of Abraham, as it was indeed the foundation of all the other mercies which he enjoyed, or advantages that he was intrusted withal. The nature of this promise, with the solemn manner of its giving unto Abraham, and the benefits included in it, he had at large declared, chap. 6:13–16. Hereby Abraham became "the father of the faithful," "the heir of the world," and "the friend of God;" so that it exceedingly illustrates the greatness of Melchisedec, in that this Abraham paid tithes unto him.

The medium of the argument in this instance is liable only unto one exception, namely, 'That Abraham was not the first that received the promises; so that although he was not, yet there might be others greater than Melchisedec, who never made any acknowledgment of his pre-eminence. For the promise was given unto Adam himself, immediately after the fall; as also unto Noah, in the covenant made with him; and to others also, who, before Abraham, died in the faith.' Ans. It is true, they had the promise and the benefit of it; but yet so as in sundry things Abraham was preferred above them all. For, [1.] He had the promise more plainly and clearly given unto him, than any of his predecessors in the faith. Hence he was the first of whom it is said, that "he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced;" as having a clearer view of his coming, and of salvation by him, than any that went before him. [2.] The promise was confirmed unto him by an oath, which it had not been unto any before. [3.] The promised Seed was in it peculiarly confined unto his family or posterity. See Heb. 2:16. [4.] His receiving of the promise was that which was the foundation of the church in his posterity, which he had peculiarly to deal withal. He had, therefore, the pre-eminence above all others in this matter of receiving the promises.

But it may yet be said, 'That Abraham had not received the promises then, when he was blessed of Melchisedec, so that it was no argument of his pre-eminence at that time.' But, [1.] He had before received the same promise, for the substance of it, which was afterwards more solemnly confirmed unto him, on the trial of his faith in offering his only son, Gen. 12:2, 3, 13:15, 16. [2.] He was then actually instated in a right unto all that further confirmation of the promises which he received on various occasions; and what followed added not unto the dignity of his person, but served only unto the confirmation of his faith. So "Melchisedec blessed him who had the promises." And we may observe, —

Obs. I. We can be made partakers of no such grace, mercy, or privilege in this world, but that God can, when he pleaseth, make an addition thereunto. "He who had received the promises" was afterwards "blessed."—We depend upon an infinite Fountain of grace and mercy, from whence it is made out unto us by various degrees, according to the good pleasure of God. Neither will he give unto us, nor are we capable to receive, in this world, the whole of what he hath provided for us, in the enjoyment whereof our final blessedness doth consist. Wherefore, as it is required of us to be thankful for what we have, or to walk

worthy of the grace we have received, yet we may live in constant expectation of more from him; and it is the great comfort and relief of our souls that we may so do.

Obs. II. It is the blessing of Christ, typed in and by Melchisedec, that makes promises and mercies effectual unto us.—He is himself the great subject of the promises, and the whole blessing of them cometh forth from him alone. All besides him, all without him, is of or under the curse. In him, from him, and by him only, are all blessings to be obtained.

Obs. III. Free and sovereign grace is the only foundation of all privileges.—All that is spoken of the dignity of Abraham is resolved into this, that "he received the promises."

Hebrews 7: 7

But what if Abraham was thus blessed by Melchisedec, doth this prove that he was less than he by whom he was blessed? It doth so, saith the apostle, and that by virtue of an unquestionable general rule:—

Ver. 7.—Χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας, τὸ ἔλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται.

Χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας. Erasm., "porro nemo negat;" "absque ulla, omni contradictione;" "and without all contradiction."

The words ἔλαττον and κοείττον, "less" and "greater," are in the neuter gender, and so rendered in most translations, "illud quod minus est, à majore;" only the Syriac reduceth them to the masculine, הַו דַּבְצִיר מָחְבַּרִךְ מִן הַו דַּמְיַתַּר מָנֵּה, "he who is the less is blessed of him who is greater," or "more excellent than he;" which is the sense of the words.

Ver. 7.—And, without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater.

Δί. The words prevent an objection, which is supposed, not expressed; and therefore are they continued with those foregoing by the conjunction δέ, as carrying on what was before asserted by a further illustration and confirmation of it. And there is in them, 1. The manner of the assertion; and, 2. The proposition itself:—

Χωρὶς πάσης ἀντιλογίας. 1. The manner of it is in these words, Χωρὶς πάσης ἀντιλογίας,—"Without," beyond, above, "all reasonable contradiction." A truth this is that cannot, that will not be gainsaid, which none will deny or oppose; as that which is evident in the light of nature, and which the order of the things spoken of doth require. All truths, especially divine truths, are such as ought not to be contradicted; and which no contradiction can evert, or change their

natures, that they should not so be. But against some of them,—not for want of truth, but either from want of evidence in themselves or from want of light in them unto whom they are proposed,—contradictions may arise, and they may be called into dispute or question. Thus it hath fallen out with all truths which we receive by mere supernatural revelation. The darkness of the minds of men, unable clearly to discern them and perfectly to comprehend them, will raise disputes about them, and objections against them. But some truths there are which have such an evidence in themselves, and such a suitableness unto the principles of reason and natural light, that no colour of opposition can be made unto them. And if any, out of brutish affections or prejudices, do force an opposition unto them, they are to be neglected and not contended withal. Wherefore that which is here intimated is, that there are some principles of truth that are so secured in their own evidence and light, as that, being unquestionable in themselves, they may be used and improved as concessions, whereon other less evident truths may be confirmed and established. The due consideration hereof is of great use in the method of teaching, or in the vindication of any questioned truths from opposition. In all teaching, especially in matters that are controverted, it is of great advantage to fix some unquestionable principles, whence those which are less evident or more opposed may be deduced, or be otherwise influenced and confirmed. Neglect hereof makes popular discourses weak in their application; and those wherein men contend for the truth, infirm in their conclusions. This course, therefore, the apostle here useth, and resolveth his present argument into such an unquestionable principle as reason and common sense must admit of.

Τὸ ἔλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται. 2. The proposition thus modified, is, That "the less is blessed of the greater;" that is, wherein one is orderly blessed by another, he that is blessed is therein less than, or beneath in dignity unto, him by whom he is blessed, as it is expressed in the Syriac translation. Expositors generally on this place distinguish the several sorts of benedictions that are in use and warrantable among men, that so they may fix on that concerning which the rule here mentioned by the apostle will hold unquestionably. But as unto the especial design of the apostle, this labour may be spared: for he treats only of sacerdotal benedictions; and with respect to them, the rule is not only certainly true, but openly evident. But to illustrate the whole, and to show how far the rule mentioned may be extended, we may reduce all sorts of blessings unto four heads:—

(1.) There is benedictio potestativa; that is, such a blessing as consists in an actual efficacious collation on, or communication of the matter of the blessing unto, the person blessed. Thus God alone can bless absolutely. He is the only fountain of all goodness, spiritual, temporal, eternal, and so of the whole entire matter of blessing, containing it all eminently and virtually in himself. And he alone can efficiently communicate it unto, or collate it on any others; which he doth as seemeth good unto him, "according to the counsel of his own will." All will grant, that with respect hereunto the apostle's maxim is unquestionable;—God is greater than man. Yea, this kind of blessing ariseth from, or dependeth solely on, that infinite distance that is between the being or nature of God and the being of all creatures. This is God's blessing, טובה תוספת,—an "addition of good," as the Jews call it; a real communication of grace, mercy, privileges, or whatever the matter of the blessing be.

(2.) There is benedictio authoritativa. This is when men, in the name, that is, by the appointment and warranty, of God, do declare any to be blessed, pronouncing the blessings unto them whereof they shall be made partakers. And this kind of blessing was of old of two sorts: [1.] Extraordinary, by virtue of especial immediate inspiration, or a spirit of prophecy. [2.] Ordinary, by virtue of office and institution. In the first way Jacob blessed his sons; which he calls a declaration of "what should befall them in the last days," Gen. 49:1. And such were all the solemn patriarchal benedictions; as that of Isaac, when he had infallible direction as to the blessing, but not in his own mind as to the person to be blessed, Gen. 27:27–29. So Moses blessed the children of Israel in their respective tribes, Deut. 33:1. In the latter, the priests, by virtue of God's ordinance, were to bless the people with this authoritative blessing: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saving unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee; the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them," Num. 6:22–27. The whole nature of this kind of blessing is here exemplified. It is founded in God's express institution and command. And the nature of it consists in "putting the name of God upon the people;" that is, declaring blessings unto them in the name of God, praying blessings for them on his command. Wherefore the word "bless" is used in a twofold sense in this institution: Verse 23, "Ye shall bless the children of Israel," is spoken of the priests; verse 27, "I will bless them," is spoken of God. The blessing is the same,

—declared by the priests, and effected by God. They blessed declaratively, he efficiently. And the blessing of Melchisedec in this place seems to have a mixture in it of both these. For as it is plain that he blessed Abraham by virtue of his sacerdotal office,—which our apostle principally considereth,—so I make no question but he was peculiarly acted by immediate inspiration from God in what he did. And in this sort of blessing the apostolical maxim maintains its evidence in the light of nature.

(3.) There is benedictio charitativa. This is, when one is said to bless another by praying for a blessing on him, or using the means whereby he may obtain a blessing. This may be done by superiors, equals, inferiors, any or all persons mutually towards one another. See 1 Kings 8:14, 55, 56; 2 Chron. 6:3; Prov. 30:11. This kind of blessing, it being only improperly so, wherein the act or duty is demonstrated by its object, doth not belong unto this rule of the apostle.

(4.) There is benedictio reverentialis. Hereof God is the object. So men are said often to "bless God," and to "bless his holy name:" which is mentioned in the Scripture as a signal duty of all that fear and love the Lord. Now this blessing of God is a declaration of his praises, with a holy, reverential, thankful admiration of his excellencies. But this belongs not at all unto the design of the apostle, nor is regulated by this general maxim, but is a particular instance of the direct contrary, wherein, without controversy, the greater is blessed of the less. It is the second sort of blessings that is alone here intended; and that is mentioned as an evident demonstration of the dignity of Melchisedec, and his pre-eminence above Abraham.

Obs. IV. It is a great mercy and privilege, when God will make use of any in the blessing of others with spiritual mercies.—It is God alone who originally and efficiently can do so, who can actually and infallibly collate a blessing on any one. Therefore is he said to "bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things," Eph. 1:3. There is no one blessing but he is the sole author and worker of it. But yet, also, he maketh use of others, severally, in various degrees of usefulness, for their communication. And this he doth, both to fill up that order of all things in dependence on himself, wherein he will be glorified; and also to make some partakers in his especial grace and favour, by using them in the collation of good things, yea, the best things, on others. For what greater privilege can any one be made partaker of, than to be an instrument in the hand of God in the communication of his grace and goodness? And a privilege it is whose exercise and improvement must be accounted for. I speak not, therefore, of them whose benedictions are euctical and charitative only, in their

mutual prayers; but of such as are in some sense authoritative. Now, a man blesseth by the way of authority, when he doth it as an especial ordinance, as he is called and appointed of God thereunto. Peculiar institution gives peculiar authority. So parents bless their children and households, and ministers the church:—

1. Parents bless their children in the name of the Lord several ways: (1.) By instruction; the discharge whereof was the glory and honour of Abraham in the sight of God himself, Gen. 18:17–19. For whereas the knowledge and fear of God are the greatest blessing that any one in this world can be made partaker of, he hath ordained that parents shall be instrumental in the communication of them unto their children; suitably unto that general law of nature whereby they are obliged in all things to seek their good. This being the end of the instruction which God hath appointed them to attend unto, they do therein bless them in the name of the Lord. And if parents did truly consider how they stand in the stead of God in this matter, how what they do is peculiarly in his name and by his authority, they would, it may be, be more diligent and conscientious in the discharge of their duty than they are. And if children could but understand that parental instruction is an instituted means of God's blessing them with the principal blessing, and that whereon all others, as unto them, do much depend,—whereunto the fifth commandment is express,—they would with more diligence and reverence apply themselves unto the reception of it than is usual among them. (2.) They do it by their example. The conversation and holy walking of parents is God's ordinance whereby he blesseth their children. This is the second way of instruction, without which the former will be insufficient, yea, insignificant. Let parents take what pains they please in the teaching and instructing of their families, unless their personal walk be holy, and their lives fruitful, they will do more for their destruction than their edification. The least disorder of life persisted in, is of more prevalency to turn aside children from the ways of God, from the liking and practice of them, than a multitude of instructions are to persuade to their embracement. For, besides that we are all naturally more prone to evil than good, and a far less occasion or means will hasten us down a precipice than raise us and bear us up in the difficult course of holy obedience, instances of a life inconsistent with instructions, or not answering them, beget secret thoughts in the minds of them who are instructed that all the pains taken therein are hypocritical; than which apprehension nothing is more effectual to alienate the minds of any from the ways of God. But when men's teachings of their families

are exemplified by the holiness and fruitfulness of their own lives, then are they an ordinance of God for the blessing of them. To pray, to read, to catechise, to instruct, and then to lead a life of frowardness, passion, worldly-mindedness, vain communication, and the like, is to pull down with one hand what we set up with the other; or rather, with both our hands to pull down our own houses. (3.) By prayer for them. So David blessed his household, 2 Sam. 6:20. For besides the duty of prayer absolutely considered, there is in those prayers, by the appointment of God, an especial plea for and application of the promises of the covenant unto them which we ourselves have received. So it is expressed in the prayer of David, 2 Sam. 7:29: "Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever." And I do not understand how those who do not believe in the especial interest of their children in the covenant of grace, can bless them in the name of the Lord in a due manner. These are some few heads of parental benediction; which whether the duty thereof be answered in that common custom which some even confine all parental blessings unto, in an open neglect of all the duties mentioned, and others of an alike nature, is not hard to determine.

2. Ministers bless the church. It is part of their ministerial duty, and it belongs unto their office so to do: (1.) They do it by putting the name of God upon the church. This was the way whereby the priests blessed the people of old, Num. 6:27. And this putting the name of God upon the church, is by the right and orderly celebration of all the holy ordinances of worship of his appointment. For the name of God and of Christ is upon them all; wherefore, in the orderly celebration of them the name of God is put upon the church, and it is brought under the promise of the meeting and blessing of God; as he hath spoken concerning every thing whereon he hath placed his name. This is an especial way of authoritative blessing, which can no way be discharged but by virtue of ministerial office. Only, let ministers take heed that they put not the name of a false god upon the church, by the introduction of any thing in religious worship which is not of God's appointment. (2.) They bless the church, in the dispensation and preaching of the word unto the conversion and edification of the souls of men. So speak the apostles concerning their preaching of the word, Acts 3:26, "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." This sending of Christ after his resurrection, was the sending of him in the ministry

of the apostles and others, by the preaching of the gospel. And the end hereof is, to bless them unto whom it is preached. And it is known that all the principal spiritual blessings of God in this world are communicated unto the souls of men by the ministry of the word, and ministerial administration of the sacraments, as the only outward causes and means thereof. Herein do ministers bless the people in the name and authority of God. (3.) They do it by the particular ministerial applications of the word unto the souls and consciences of men. This authority hath Christ given unto them. Saith he, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," John 20:23. I know what use hath been made of these words; that is, how they have been abused to give countenance unto the necessity of private, confession of all sins unto the priests, and of their power of absolution or remission thereon. But yet the real intention of the words, and the truth that is in them, must not be waived or overlooked. It is not, therefore, the mere preaching of the word, and therein a doctrinal declaration of whose sins are remitted and whose sins are retained, according to the gospel, which men are respectively interested in by their faith or unbelief, that is here intended (the commission giving power whereunto is of a more general nature): but an especial application of the word unto the consciences of men with respect unto their sins is included therein. And this is done two ways: [1.] With respect unto the judgment of the church; [2.] With respect unto the judgment of God. The first is that binding or loosing which the Lord Christ hath given power for unto the ministers and guides of the church, as to the communion thereof, Matt. 18:18. For by the ministerial application of the word unto the souls and consciences of men, are they to be continued in or excluded from the communion of the church; which is called the binding or loosing of them. The other respects God himself, and the sense which the conscience of a sinner hath of the guilt of sin before him. In this case the ministers of the gospel are authorized, in the name of Christ, to remit their sins; that is, so to apply the promises of mercy and grace unto their souls and consciences, as that, being received by faith, they may have peace with God. So are they authorized to remit or retain sins, according to the tenor and terms of the gospel. Not that the remission of sins absolutely doth depend on an act of office, but the release of the conscience of a sinner from the sense of guilt doth sometimes much depend upon it, rightly performed; that is, by due application of the promises of the gospel unto such as believe and repent. (4.) How they bless the church by prayer and example, may be understood from what hath been spoken concerning those things with respect unto parents. The

authority that is in them depends on God's especial institution, which exempts them from and exalts them above the common order of mutual charitative benedictions. (5.) They bless the people declaratively; as a pledge whereof it hath been always of use in the church, at the close of the solemn duties of its assemblies, wherein the name of God is put upon it, to bless the people by express mention of the blessing of God, which they pray for upon them. But yet, because the same thing is done in the administration of all other ordinances, and this benediction is only euctical, or by the way of prayer, I shall not plead for the necessity of it. And we may yet infer two things from hence:—

Obs. V. That those who are thus appointed to bless others in the name of God, and thereby exalted unto a pre-eminence above those that are blessed by his appointment, ought to be accordingly regarded by all that are so blessed by them.—It is well if Christians do rightly consider what their duty is unto them who are appointed as a means to communicate all spiritual blessings unto them. And,—

Obs. VI. Let those who are so appointed take heed lest, by their miscarriage, they prove a curse unto them whom they ought to bless.—For if they are negligent in the performance of their duties in the things mentioned, much more if therewithal they put the name of any false god upon them, they are no otherwise.

Hebrews 7: 8

The eighth verse carrieth on the same argument, by a particular application unto the matter in hand of the things which he had in general observed before in Melchisedec; for whereas the apostle had before declared, that he was "without father, without mother, without beginning of days or end of life," he now shows how all this conduced unto his purpose.

Ver. 8.—Καὶ ὧδε μὲν δεκάτας ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκεῖ δὲ, μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ.

Ἄνθρωποι. Syr., by a usual idiotism of that language, "the sons of man." Ἀποθνήσκοντες "qui moriuntur," "who die." Vulg. Lat., "homines morientes," "dying men;" of which difference we must speak afterwards. Μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ, generally, "de quo testatum est, quod vivat." Vulg. Lat., "ibi autem contestatur quia vivit;" which the Rhemists render, "but there he hath witness that he liveth:" both obscurely. Arias, "testatione dictus quia vivit;" to no

advantage. Μαρτυρούμενος is properly, "is de quo testatur;" as Erasmus, Beza, Castalio, Schmidt, render it. The Arabic concurs with the Vulgar. The Syriac, by way of paraphrase, "he of whom the Scripture witnesseth that he liveth."

Ver. 8.—And here men verily that die receive tithes; but there he of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

There is in the words a comparison and opposition between the Levitical priests and Melchisedec, in this matter of receiving tithes, which in general was common to them both. And we may consider in them, 1. The circumstances of the comparison. 2. The general agreement of both sorts, which is the ground of the comparison. 3. The parts of the antithesis, or opposition, or dissimilitude between them:—

Μέν. 1. The circumstances of the comparison are two: (1.) The manner of its introduction, or the earnestness of the assertion, in the particle μέν. It is as much as "quidem" or "equidem," "truly," "verily;" which is omitted in our translation, though elsewhere the same particle is so rendered. 'This, moreover, is the state of the case in this matter.' And the insertion of it is proper unto an affirmation upon a concession, as this here is. Ὧδε, ἐκεῖ. (2.) The determination of the time, or place, or manner of the opposition, in these adverbs ὧδε and ἐκεῖ, "here" and "there." Ὧδε usually refers unto place; and some think that the apostle hath respect unto Jerusalem, the seat of the Levitical priesthood, and the land of Canaan, which alone was tithable according to the law; for the Jews do judge, and that rightly, that the law of legal tithing extended not itself beyond the bounds of the land of Canaan,—a sufficient evidence that it was positive and ceremonial. In opposition hereunto, ἐκεῖ, "there," must signify some other place, or any place where the priesthood of Melchisedec hath its signification; that is, in Christian religion. But the truth is, if ὧδε, "here," signifies a certain and determinate place, that opposed in ἐκεῖ, "there," must be Salem, where Melchisedec dwelt; which was not only afterwards tithable, as within the bounds of Canaan, but most probably was Jerusalem itself, as we have declared. This conjecture, therefore, is too curious; nor do we need to tie up ourselves unto the precise signification of the word ὧδε, although that also be sometimes used with respect unto time as well as place. Wherefore these words, "here" and "there," do express the several different states under consideration. "Here," is in the case of the Levitical priesthood; and "there" respects the case of Melchisedec, as stated, Gen. 14.

Δεκάτα; λαμβάνουσι. 2. The foundation of the comparison, that wherein both agreed, is in this, that they received tithes. It is expressed of the one sort only, namely, the Levitical priests,—they received tithes; but it is understood of the other also, whereon the word is repeated and inserted in our translation, "But there he receiveth them." Δεκάτας λαμβάνουσι, "They do receive tithes," in the present tense. But it may be said, there was none that then did so, or at least "de jure" could do so, seeing the law of tithing was abolished. Wherefore an enallage may be allowed here of the present time for that which was past; "they do," that is, "they did so" whilst the law was in force. But neither is this necessary; for, as I have before observed, the apostle admits, or takes it for granted, that the Mosaical system of worship was yet continued, and argueth on that concession unto the necessity of its approaching abolition. And yet we need not here the use of this supposition; for the words determine neither time nor place, but the state of religion under the law. According unto the law are tithes to be paid unto, and received by such persons. This, therefore, is agreed, that both the Levitical priests and Melchisedec received tithes.

Ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι. 3. The opposition and difference lies in the qualification and properties of them by whom they are received. For, (1.) Those on the one side, that is, of the Levitical priesthood, were ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι, "homines qui moriuntur," or "homines morientes,"—"men that die," "dying men;" that is, men subject unto death, mortal men, who lived and died in the discharge of their office, according unto the common laws of mortality. And the observation of Schlichtingius on these words is, as far as I can understand, useless unto his own design, much more to the apostle's: "Notandum vero quod non mortalibus hominibus, sed morientibus tantum Melchisedecum auctor opponat, nec immortalem eum esse, sed vivere dicit; vita autem non mortalitati sed morti proprie opponitur." Something is aimed at in way of security unto another opinion, namely, that all men were created in a state of mortality, without respect unto sin. But nothing is gotten by this subtilty. For by dying men the apostle intends not men that were actually dying, as it were at the point of death; for in that condition the priests could neither execute their office nor receive tithes of the people. Only he describes such persons as in the whole course of their ministry were liable unto death from the common condition of mortality, and in their several seasons died accordingly. Wherefore "dying men," or men subject to death, and "mortal men," are in this case the same. And although life as to the principle of it be opposed unto death, yet as unto a continual duration, the thing here intended

by the apostle, it is opposed unto mortality, or an obnoxiousness unto death. For a representation is designed of him who was made a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." Wherefore, saith the apostle, 'those who received tithes after the law were all of them mortal men, that had both beginning of days and end of life.' So the death of Aaron, the first of them, and in him of all his successors, is recorded in the Scripture.

Μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ. (2.) In opposition unto this state of the Levitical priests, it is affirmed that ἐκεῖ, in the case of Melchisedec, μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ —"it is witnessed that he liveth." How "he liveth," and how it is "witnessed unto that he liveth," we must inquire. For it is apparently Melchisedec of whom in the first place, as the type, these things are spoken; and yet we know that really and in his own person he was dead long before. But there are several things on the account whereof it is said that "it is witnessed that he liveth." For, [1.] Whatever the Scripture is silent in as to Melchisedec, which it usually relates of others in the like state, our apostle takes for a contrary testimony unto him. For he lays down this general principle, that what the Scripture conceals of Melchisedec, it doth it to instruct us in the mystery of his person and ministry, as types of Christ and his. Hence the silence of the Scripture, in what it useth to express, must in this case be interpreted as a testimony unto the contrary. So it witnesseth of him that "he was without father, without mother, without descent," in that it mentioneth none of them. And whereas he hath "neither beginning of days nor end of life" recorded in the Scripture, it is thereby "witnessed that," not absolutely, but as to his typical consideration, "he liveth." For there are no bounds nor periods fixed unto his priesthood, nor did it expire by the bringing in that of Levi, as that did by the introduction of Christ's. [2.] He did actually continue his office unto the end of that dispensation of God and his worship wherein he was employed: and this witnesseth the perpetuity of his life, in opposition unto the Levitical priests; for these two states are compared by the apostle, that of Melchisedec and that of Levi. There was a time limited unto this priesthood in the house of Aaron; and during that time one priest died and another succeeded in several generations, until they were greatly multiplied, as the apostle observeth, verse 23. But during the whole dispensation of things with respect unto Melchisedec, he continued in his own person to execute his office, from first to last, without being subject unto death; wherein "it is witnessed that he liveth." [3.] He is said to "live," that is, always to do so, because his office continueth for ever, and yet no mere mortal man succeeded him therein. [4.] In

this whole matter he is considered not absolutely and personally, but typically, and as a representation of somewhat else; and what is represented in the type, but is really, subjectively, and properly found only in the antitype, may be affirmed of the type as such. So it is in all sacramental institutions; as the paschal lamb was called expressly "the LORD'S passover," Exod. 12:11, when it was only a pledge and token thereof; as, under the new testament, the bread and wine in the sacred supper are called "the body and blood of Christ," which they do represent. Thus it is true really and absolutely of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he liveth for ever, that he is a priest for ever; which the apostle much insisteth on and urgeth unto his purpose afterwards. This eternity, or ever-living of Jesus Christ, was represented in Melchisedec, in that it is not said anywhere in the Scripture that he died: "it is witnessed," therefore, "that he liveth," because he whom he represents doth really do so, and his own death is not mentioned, on purpose that he might so represent him. And the apostle's argument unto the dignity and pre-eminence of Melchisedec above the Levitical priests in this instance is of an unquestionable evidence: for consider Melchisedec, not in his natural being and existence, which belongs not unto this mystery, but in his Scripture being and existence, and he is immortal, always living; wherein he is more excellent than those who were always obnoxious unto death in the exercise of their office. And from the branches of this comparison we may take two observations:—

Obs. I. In the outward administration of his worship, God is pleased to make use of poor, frail, mortal, dying men.—So he did of old, and so he continues still to do. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Zech. 1:5. The prophets of old, the most eminent administrators under the old testament, they were all mortal, dying men; and whilst they lived in this world they were subject unto like passions with other men, James 5:17. And the same account the apostle giveth us of the principal administrators of the new testament, 2 Cor. 4:8–12, 6:8–10. And we know it is so with all those into whose hands the same work is transmitted. Yea, ofttimes, as to the infirmities of body and outward condition, their weakness and frailty are signalized above others. Nor doth any advantage accrue to the gospel by the secular exaltation of such as pretend unto the same employment; wherein, without other qualifications, they do little resemble the ministry of Christ himself. Such, I say, doth God please to make use of; persons obnoxious unto all infirmities and temptations with all other believers, and equally with them falling under the stroke of mortality. He could have accomplished his whole design immediately by his grace and Spirit,

without the institution of any administrators; he could have employed his holy angels in the declaration and dispensation of the gospel; or he could have raised up men so signalized with wisdom, and all endowments of mind and body, as should have eminently distinguished them from the whole race of mankind besides: but waiving these, and all other ways possible and easy unto his infinite wisdom and power, he hath chosen to make use, in this great occasion, of poor, infirm, frail, tempted, sinning, dying men. And sundry reasons of this his holy counsel are expressed in the Scripture:—

1. He doth it to make it evident that it is his own power, and nothing else, which gives efficacy and success unto all gospel administrations: 2 Cor. 4:7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." There is an "excellency of power" accompanying the dispensation of the word. Mighty spiritual effects are produced by it, such as wherein the glory of God doth consist, and whereon the eternal welfare of the souls of men doth depend. This glory, in subduing the adverse power of sin, Satan, and the world; in the quickening, sanctifying, saving the souls of the elect; God will be seen and owned in,—he will not give it unto another. Whereas, therefore, those by whom these treasures are communicated unto others, are frail, perishing, "earthen vessels,"—or those by whom the gospel is dispensed are poor, frail, weak men, seen and known so to be,—there is no veil by their ministry cast over the glory of God. There is not a soul convinced, converted, or comforted by their word, but they may truly say of it as the apostles did of the miracle which they wrought, Acts 3:12, ' "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power and holiness we had made this man to walk," this blind man to see, this dead man to live? By the consideration of our meanness all may discern that the excellency of this power is of God, and not of us.' Yea, for this very end our apostle refused to make use of such a persuasiveness of words and exercise of wisdom as might give any appearance or countenance unto such an apprehension as though by them this effect were produced: 1 Cor. 2:4, 5, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." And herein ought he to be an example unto us all. But it is come to that with many, that being destitute utterly of what he had,—namely, an ability to dispense the word in the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power,"—they do wholly betake themselves unto what he refused, or the "enticing words of man's wisdom," according to their ability. But what the Jews spoke blasphemously of

Christ, upon his opening the eyes of him who was born blind, may in a sense be truly spoken of any of us upon the opening of the eyes of them that were spiritually blind, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner," John 9:24.

2. God hath so ordered things, in wisdom and grace, that the administrators of holy things unto others might have experience in themselves of their state and condition, so as to be moved with compassion towards them, care about them, and zeal for them. Without these graces, and their constant exercise, men will be but very useless instruments in this work. And they will not grow anywhere but in men's own experience. For how shall he be tender, compassionate, careful towards the souls of others, who knows no reason why he should be so towards his own? The high priest of old was such an one as "could have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way; for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity," Heb. 5:2. And therein was he a type of Christ, who "was in all points tempted like as we are," that he might be ready "to succour them that are tempted." This gave him the experience of compassion in the exercise of it. Wherefore, when a minister of the gospel knows his own weakness, infirmities, and temptations, his need of mercy and grace, the way of his obtaining supplies of them, the danger of the snares which he is exposed unto, the value of his own soul, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and excellency of the eternal reward, he cannot, considering the charge committed unto him, and the duty required of him, but be moved with pity, compassion, tenderness, love, and zeal, towards those unto whom he doth administer; especially considering how greatly their eternal welfare depends on his ability, diligence, and faithfulness in the discharge of his duty. And this proves, on sundry accounts, greatly to the advantage of the poor tempted disciples of Christ; for it makes a representation unto them of his own compassion and love, as the great shepherd of the sheep, Isa. 40:11; and causeth a needful supply of spiritual provision to be always in readiness for them, and that to be administered unto them with experience of its efficacy and success.

3. That the power of gospel grace and truth may be exemplified unto the eyes of them unto whom they are dispensed, in the persons of them by whom they are administered, according unto God's appointment. It is known unto all who know aught in this matter, what temptations and objections will arise in the minds of poor sinners against their obtaining any interest in the grace and mercy that is dispensed in the gospel. Some, they judge, may be made partakers of them; but for them, and such as they are, there seems to be no relief provided.

But is it no encouragement unto them, to see that, by God's appointment, the tenders of his grace and mercy are made unto their souls by men subject unto like passions with themselves; and who, if they had not freely obtained grace, would have been as vile and unworthy as themselves? For as the Lord called the apostle Paul to the ministry, who had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," that he might "in him show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,"—that is, for the encouragement even of such high criminal offenders to believe, 1 Tim. 1:13, 16; so in more ordinary cases, the mercy and grace which the ministers of the gospel did equally stand in need of with those unto whom they dispense it, and who have received it, is for a pattern, example, and encouragement of them to believe after their example.

4. In particular, God maketh use of persons that die in this matter, that their testimony unto the truth of gospel grace and mercy may be complete and unquestionable. Death is the great touchstone and trial of all things of this nature, as to their efficacy and sincerity. Many things will yield relief in life, and various refreshments, which upon the approach of death vanish into nothing. So it is with all the comforts of this world, and with all things that have not an eternal truth and substance in them. Had not those, therefore, who dispense sacred things, been designed themselves to come unto this touchstone of their own faith, profession, and preaching, those who must die, and know always that they must do so, would have been unsatisfied what might have been the condition with them, had they been brought unto it; and so have ground to fear in themselves what will become of that faith wherein they have been instructed, in the warfare of death, when it shall approach. To obviate this fear and objection, God hath ordained that all those who administer the gospel shall all of them bring their own faith unto that last trial; that so, giving a testimony unto the sincerity and efficacy of the things which they have preached, in that they commit the eternal salvation of their souls unto them (and higher testimony none can give), they may be encouragements unto others to follow their example, to imitate their faith, and pursue their course unto the end. And for this cause also doth God ofttimes call them forth unto peculiar trials, exercises, afflictions, and death itself in martyrdom, that they may be an example and encouragement unto the whole church.

I cannot but observe, for a close of this discourse, that as the unavoidable infirmities of the ministers of the gospel, managed and passed through in a course of faith, holiness, and sincere obedience, are on many accounts of

singular use and advantage unto the edification and consolation of the church; so the evil examples of any of them, in life and death, with the want of those graces which should be excited unto exercise by their infirmities, are pernicious thereunto.

Obs. II. The life of the church depends on the everlasting life of Jesus Christ. —It is said of Melchisedec, as he was a type of him, "It is witnessed that he liveth." Christ doth so, and that for ever; and hereon, under the failings, infirmities, and death of all other administrators, depend the preservation, life, continuance, and salvation of the church. But this must be spoken to peculiarly on verse 25, whither it is remitted.

Hebrews 7: 9, 10

It may be objected unto the whole precedent argument of the apostle, 'That although Abraham himself paid tithes unto Melchisedec, yet it followeth not that Melchisedec was superior unto the Levitical priests, concerning whom alone the question was between him and the Jews. For although Abraham might be a priest in some sense also, by virtue of common right, as were all the patriarchs, yet was he not so by virtue of any especial office, instituted of God to abide in the church. But when God afterwards, by peculiar law and ordinance, erected an order and office of priesthood in the family of Levi, it might be superior unto; or exalted above that of Melchisedec, although Abraham paid tithes unto him.' This objection, therefore, the apostle obviates in these verses; and therewithal, giving his former argument a further improvement, he makes a transition, according unto his usual custom (as it hath been often observed that it is his method to do), unto his especial design, in proving the excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of the law, which is the main scope of this whole discourse.

Ver. 9, 10.—Καὶ, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, διὰ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Λευὶ ὁ δεκάτας λαμβάνων δεδεκάτωται· ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὀσφύϊ τοῦ πατρὸς ἦν, ὅτε συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Μελχισεδέκ.

Ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, "ut verbum dicere," "as to speak a word." Vulg. Lat., "ut ita dictum sit," "be it so said." Syr., "as any one may say." Arab., "and it is said that this discourse" (or "reason") "may be some way ended." "Ut ita loquar," "as I may so speak." In the rest of the words there is neither difficulty nor difference among translators.

Ver. 9, 10.—And, as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him.

There are three things observable in these words: 1. The manner of the introduction of the apostle's new assertion. 2. The assertion itself, which hath the force of a new argument unto his purpose, verse 9. And, 3. The proof of his assertion, in verse 10.

Ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν. 1. The manner of the introduction of his assertion is in these words, "As I may so say." This qualification of the assertion makes an abatement of it, one way or other. Now this is not as to the truth of the proposition, but as to the propriety of the expression. The words are as if that which is expressed were actually so, namely, that Levi himself paid tithes, whereas it was so only virtually. The thing itself intended was, with respect unto the apostle's purpose, as if it had been so indeed; though, Levi not being then actually existent, he could not be tithed in his own person. Nor is the apostle dubious of the truth of the consequent which he urgeth from this observation, as if he had said "prope dixerim;" which is supposed as one signification of this phrase. Only, the instance being new, and he arguing from what was virtual only as if it had been actual, he gave his assertion this qualification. This is spoken upon an allowance of the common acceptation of the sense of these words among interpreters. For my part, I rather incline to judge that he useth this phrase for as much as "ut verbo dicam,"—'To sum up the whole in a word, to put an issue unto this dispute between the Levitical priesthood and that of Melchisedec, I say, that not only Abraham, but even Levi himself was tithed by him.'

Καὶ Λευΐ. 2. His assertion is, that "Levi, who received tithes, was tithed in Abraham," namely, when Abraham gave the tithes of all to Melchisedec. By "Levi" he intendeth not the person of Levi absolutely, the third son of Jacob, but his posterity, or the whole tribe proceeding from him, so far as they were interested in the priesthood; for Levi himself never received tithes of any, the priesthood being erected in his family long after his death, in the person of his great-grandchild, Aaron. So, then, Levi who received tithes is the same with the sons of Levi who received the priesthood, verse 5, namely, in their several generations unto that day.

Δεδεκάτωται διὰ Ἀβραάμ. Of this Levi it is affirmed that δεδεκάτωται διὰ Ἀβραάμ, "he was tithed" or "paid tithes in Abraham," or through him and by him, as the word is. When Abraham himself gave tithes to Melchisedec, he did

it not in his own name only, but in the name of himself and his whole posterity. And this, upon the principles before laid down and vindicated, proves the pre-eminence of the priesthood of Melchisedec above that of the house and family of Levi. All the difficulty of the argument lies in the proof of the assertion, namely, that Levi did indeed so pay tithes in Abraham. This the apostle therefore proves by the observation which he lays down, verse 10, "For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him."

Ἐν τῇ ὀσφύϊ τοῦ πατρός. 3. The force of this proof seems to depend on a double principle: (1.) That children, the whole posterity of any one, are in his loins before they are born. And this principle is sure in the light of nature and common reason; they are in them as the effect in its cause, nor have they any future existence but with relation unto their progenitors, even the remotest of them. (2.) That what any one doth, that all his posterity are esteemed to do in and by him. But it is certain that this rule will not generally hold, nor indeed will it ever do so absolutely, without some other cogent circumstances. By human laws, the crimes of men reflect dishonour in some cases on their families; and on the other side, they entail the honour which by their worth they have acquired on their posterities. What a man also gives away of his estate unto public uses, as in the foundation of schools or hospitals, his children may be said to do it in him, because so much is decreased from their inheritance;—as here, what Abraham gave to Melchisedec, it was alienated from his posterity, Levi among the rest. But none of these things reach the case in hand, or are sufficient to give force or evidence unto the reasoning of the apostle. Wherefore, to find them out, sundry things must be observed which are manifest truths in themselves, and on the supposition whereof the apostle's argument stands firm:—

(1.) That Abraham was now called of God, and separated unto his service, so as to be the foundation of a new church in the world. And there is a relation unto such an original stock in all the branches, beyond what they have unto any other intermediate progenitors. Hence all the idolatrous nations in the world constantly made the first persons from whom they derived their original, or whose offspring they would be accounted, their gods whom they worshipped. These were their "Joves indigites," their home-born deities, whom they honoured, and whose honours they thought descended unto them by inheritance.

(2.) He had now received the promise that God would be a God unto him and his seed after him,—whereby all his posterity were taken into covenant with him; and hereon Abraham covenanted with God in the name of, and as the great representative of all his seed. And such covenants are the foundation of all order and rule in this world. For after persons, or a people, have covenanted into such agreements in government, and as to the administration of common right among themselves,—provided the terms whereon they have agreed be good and suitable unto the light of nature,—their posterity are not at liberty to alter and change them at their pleasure; for whereas they derive all their rights and inheritances from their progenitors, they are supposed in them to have consented unto all that was done by them.

(3.) Hereon what God said and did unto Abraham, he said it and did it unto all his seed in him. The promises were theirs, and the inheritance was theirs; yea, what God is said to give unto Abraham so often, namely, the whole land of Canaan, was never actually made good unto him in his own person, no, not a foot's breadth: but he received the grant of it as the representative of his posterity, who, four hundred years after, had the actual possession of it.

(4.) What Abraham did solemnly in obedience unto God, by virtue of the covenant, as a public condition thereof, he did undertake in it for his posterity, and performed it in their name; and therefore God enjoined him to bring all his posterity under the token of that engagement, in circumcision, so soon as they were capable thereof. And on the other hand, God continually affirms that he would do them good, because of his oath and engagement unto Abraham, seeing they were intended therein. Wherefore,—

(5.) Abraham, in this solemn address unto God by Melchisedec, the type of Christ, wherein he expressed his covenant-obedience unto him, was the representative of all his posterity, and in particular of Levi and all the priests that descended from him. And having now received the whole land, by virtue of a covenant, in the behalf of his posterity, that it should be theirs, though he himself had never possession of it, nor in it, he doth in the name of his posterity, and as their representative, give the tenths unto God by Melchisedec, as that chief rent which God for ever reserved unto himself, upon his grant. When the people came actually to possess the land, they held it always on this condition, that the tenths of all should be given unto God. And this Abraham, in his taking seisin of it for them, paid in their name. So truly and virtually was Levi himself tithed in the loins of Abraham, when Melchisedec met him.

Wherefore it was not merely Levi being in the loins of Abraham with respect unto natural generation, whence he is said to be tithed in him, but his being in him with respect unto the covenant which Abraham entered into with God in the name of his whole posterity.

This reasoning of the apostle's, I confess, at first view seemeth intricate, and more remote from cogency than any elsewhere used by him. And therefore by some profane persons hath it been cavilled at. But all things of that nature arise merely from want of a due reverence unto the word of God. When we come unto it with those satisfactions in our minds, that there is truth and divine wisdom in every expression of it, that all its reasonings are cogent and effectual, though we understand them not, we shall not fail, upon a humble inquiry, to attain what we may safely embrace, or see what we ought to admire. And so this place, which at first sight seems to present us with a reasoning on a very uncertain foundation, being duly inquired into, we find it resolved into the firm principles of reason and religion.

And the foregoing observation will expedite two difficult questions which expositors raise unto themselves on this verse. The first whereof is, Whether Christ himself may not, as well as Levi, be said to pay tithes in Abraham, as being in his loins? which would utterly frustrate the design of the apostle. The second is, How or in what sense one may be said to do any thing in another, which may be reckoned or imputed unto him?

For the first of these, Austin and others have well laboured in the solution of it. The sum of what they say is, that the Lord Christ was not in Abraham as Levi was, not in his nature as it was corrupted; nor did he educe or derive his nature from him by carnal generation, or the common way of the propagation of mankind. And these things do constitute a sufficient difference and distance between them in this matter. But yet with these considerations, and on the supposition of them, there is another which contains the true and proper reason of this difference. And that is, that the Lord Christ was never in Abraham as a federate, as one taken into covenant with him, and so represented by him, as Levi was. Abraham was taken into covenant with Christ, as the head, sponsor, surety, and mediator of the new covenant; with respect whereunto he says of himself and the elect, "Behold I and the children which the LORD hath given me." Hereon he was the representative of Abraham and all that believe, and what he did is imputed unto them. But he was never taken into covenant with Abraham, nor was capable of so being, seeing unto him it was a covenant of

pardon and justification by faith, which He was no way concerned in but as the procurer of them for others. Wherefore what Abraham did cannot be imputed unto him, so as he should be esteemed to have done them in him.

And this makes way for the solution of the general question, How one may be said to do any thing in another which shall be reckoned unto him as his own act? And this may be by virtue of a covenant, and no otherwise. Hence divines do usually illustrate the imputation of the sin of Adam unto his posterity by this example of Levi; though I have not met with any who truly understand the ground of the comparison, which is Abraham acting as a covenanter in the name of his posterity. But whereas this is opposed with some vehemency by Schlichtingius in his comment on this place, I shall transcribe his words, and consider his discourse: "Hæc sententia non ad omnes actiones transferenda est; sed ad eas tantum, quæ propriè versantur vel in auctione vel in diminutione rerum quæ à parentibus in liberos devolvi et hæreditario jure transferri solent, qualis actio est decimarum solutio. Persolvuntur enim de bonis et facultatibus, quæ hactenus cùm sunt liberorum, quatenus jus hæreditatis ad eos spectat, præsertim si certum sit, fore liberos, qui in bona succedant, quemadmodum Abrahamo contigit, cui certa fuit à Deo promissa posteritas. Quemadmodum enim hæredes personam patris post mortem ratione possessionis bonorum veluti repræsentant, ita antequam hæredes à patre separentur et de bonis paternis statuendi arbitrium habeant, pater omnium liberorum suorum personam quadam ratione refert, et quicquid de illis statuerit aut fecerit id hæredes quodammodo fecisse censentur. Dico, quodammodo, quia propriè id dici non potest; nec auctor hic D. id propriè factum esse asserit, sed improprietatem verbis suis subesse ipsemet profitetur, ut antea vidimus. Ex dictis autem facilè intelligitur, id quod nos unà cum auctore D. statuimus, ad eos tantum successores seu posteros esse extendendum ad quos vel certò, ut Abrahami posteris contigit, vel saltem verisimiliter perventura sit hæreditas parentis, et notabilis aliqua bonorum ab eo profectorum portio. Alioquin vis illa hæreditatis de qua diximus, expirabit, nec posteris tribui poterit id quod majorum aliquis circa bona sua fecerit. Quibus ita explicatis, facile jam apparet falli eos qui ex hoc loco colligunt omnem Adami posteritatem in ipso Adamo parente suo peccasse, et mortis supplicium verè fuisse commeritum. Nam vel de eo nunc quidquam dicam ipsum auctorem improprietatem in hac loquendi forma agnoscere, nequaquam id extendendum est ad parentum majorumve peccata ac merita. Etenim peccata ac merita qua talia mere sunt personalia, seu personam ejus qui peccat non egrediuntur, nec eatenus parentes posteritatem suam repræsentant;

licèt fieri queat ut ex eorum delicto damnum aliquod nec exiguum ad liberos redundet, quemadmodum quidem in Adami delicto contigit; ipsum tamen peccatum ac meritum Adami revera non communicatur cum ejus posteritate, ac proinde posteri Adami ob parentis sui noxam revera non puniuntur, nisi et ipsi parentem fuerint imitati."

I have transcribed these words at large, because their design is to defeat that article of our faith concerning the imputation of the sin of Adam unto all his posterity; which there is no doubt but they will make use of who are gone over among ourselves unto the negative of it: and that it might appear whose heifer they plough withal who deny the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto justification, because "those things that are personal and inherent in one cannot be communicated unto another." I say, therefore,—

1. That this assertion, "One being accounted unto another in what he doth, holds only in those things which belong unto the increase or diminution of an inheritance which descends from parents unto children, and not otherwise," is "gratis dictum," without pretence or confirmation. Even in things moral, God threatens to "visit the iniquities of the fathers on the children." So the Israelites wandered penally in the wilderness forty years, and bare the iniquity of their parents. The infants that perished in the flood, and at the conflagration of Sodom, died penally under the judgment that came for the sin of their parents. Wherefore the general foundation of his whole discourse is unproved and false, and the application of it unto the present case, as we shall see, weak and impertinent. For,—

2. This renders the argument of the apostle as weak and impertinent as any thing can be imagined. For it allows Levi to be no otherwise tithed in Abraham, but as part of the goods which Abraham gave in tithe to Melchisedec would have descended unto him; for he was but one of the twelve sons of Jacob, the grandchild of Abraham, whose share in those tithes cannot be computed to be worth mentioning, much less to bear the weight of an argument in so great a cause. Besides, it is not the person of Levi, but his posterity in the family of Aaron, that is intended; and such movables as were tithed by Abraham do seldom descend through so many generations. It is therefore ridiculous to impose such a kind of argumentation on the holy apostle.

3. Yea, this interpretation is directly contrary unto what the apostle designed to confirm by the instance he gives. For that which he aimed at, was to prove Levi inferior to Melchisedec, by his paying of tithes in the loins of Abraham:

but if he did this no otherwise but that some goods that should have descended unto him were given unto Melchisedec, it argues him rather superior unto him; for absolutely he that gives is superior to him that receives, as it is in general a more blessed thing to give than to receive.

4. That which he proceeds upon is a general rule of his own framing, which is no way applicable unto this particular case, as it is a particular case. It is this, "That, as children succeed into the room of their parents as to their goods, and after a sort represent them; so parents, before their children come to inherit, do represent their children, so as that they may be said in some sense to do what is done by their parents." But this is a rule made without any colour of reason. For, (1.) I would know when this representation and concernment should expire, or whether it holds unto all generations. If it hold for ever, then may we all be said in some sort to do what Adam did with his goods and lands before he died, and so of all our intervenient progenitors. If it do expire, and this relation abideth only for a season, I desire to know the bounds of that season. Aaron was the first of the house of Levi who is intended in these words, and he was the seventh generation from Abraham; in which time it is probable, if ever, this right of inheritance would expire. (2.) It is not true in any sense, in the very next parents in most cases. For suppose a parent be wicked and flagitious, and shall waste his substance and goods in riotous living, in what sense shall his son, suppose him a person fearing God, be said so to have disposed of his goods in him? (3.) The truth is, unless it be by a subsequent approbation of what our progenitors have done, or by virtue of a covenant whereby they and their posterity were obliged (which is the case in hand), children can in no sense be said to do what their progenitors have done in the disposal of their goods and inheritances. Neither, indeed, will a subsequent approbation give any tolerable sense unto this assertion, unless there be a power of an effectual dissent in the children also. If a man give a part of his estate to found an hospital, and leave the care of it unto his posterity, with this proviso, that if any of them saw just cause for it, they should resume the estate into their own possession; in case they do not so, they may in some sense be said to do what indeed their father did. But if this be not in their power, though they approve of what he did, they cannot be said to have done it. But in covenants the case is plain. Men may enter into a mutual covenant for the erection of a government among them, which proving a foundation of all their civil rights for the future, their posterity may be said to have made that covenant, and to be obliged thereby, as it was in this case.

5. Neither will it advantage his pretence, with a seeming acknowledgment of some impropriety in the assertion, in these words, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, "as I may so say." For although it should be granted that he intends some impropriety in the expression, yet there must be truth in his assertion, which this interpretation will not allow; for if it be true only in the sense he contends for, it is true in none at all, for that is not any. But the meaning of these words is, "ut verbo dicam,"—'That I may give you a summary of the whole, that which my argument riseth up unto.'

6. Having given us this crooked rule, he adds a limitation unto it, whereby he hopes to reduce the whole to his purpose. For saith he, "This rule is not to be extended unto the merits or sins of parents and ancestors, though some loss may accrue unto the children thereby;"—for thence he infers, that though we may suffer some loss by the sin of Adam, yet his sin is not imputed unto us. But, (1.) How far the children of flagitious parents may not only suffer loss, but undergo temporal punishment also, for the sins of their parents, was showed before in the instances of those who perished in their infancy, both by the flood and in the conflagration of Sodom. (2.) The case between any other parent and his posterity is not the same as it was between Adam and us all; so that these things are sophistically jumbled together. There is, indeed, an analogy between Adam and his posterity on the one hand, and Christ with believers on the other; and never was there, nor shall there ever be, the like relation between any else: for these two individual persons were appointed of God to be the heads of the two covenants, and representatives of the federates, as unto the ends of the covenants. Hence the whole evil of the one and the good of the other, as they were, and as far as they were, heads of the covenants, are imputed unto them who derive from them in their respective covenants. But after the first sin Adam ceased to be a head unto his posterity, as to the good or evil of that covenant, which was now broken and disannulled. Neither was he nor any of his posterity ever after restored or assumed into the same state and condition. It is therefore highly vain to confound the consideration of our concernment in what Adam did as he was the head of the covenant, with what he afterwards did, and other intervenient progenitors might do. All this our apostle confirms at large, Rom. 5.

7. Abraham was taken into a new administration of the covenant, with new promises and seals; but he neither was nor could be made the head and representative of that covenant whereinto he was taken, otherwise than typically. Hence his moral good or evil could not be reckoned unto his posterity

in covenant. But yet he was made the head and spring of the administration of its outward privileges; and this, so far as his trust extended, was imputed unto his posterity, as in the case of circumcision. Wherefore, seeing what he did unto Melchisedec belonged unto the administration of the covenant committed unto him, Levi is rightly said to have done it in him also. And so these things do mutually illustrate one another. But to deny that we were all in Adam, as the head of the first covenant, that we sinned in him, that the sin which we in any sense have sinned in him is imputed unto us, is not to dispute with us, but expressly to contradict the Holy Ghost

But we may take some observations from these words; as,—

Obs. I. They who receive tithes of others, for their work in holy administrations, are thereby proved to be superior unto them of whom they do receive them.—They are given unto them, among other ends, as an acknowledgment of their dignity. So it was when they were paid of old by God's institution; and so it would be still, if they might be paid or received in a due manner, with respect unto the labour of any in gospel administrations. But whereas not one among thousands doth give or pay them on any other ground but because they must do so whether they will or no; nor would do so any more, were it not for the coercive, enforcing power of human laws; if they on the other side that do receive them, do look on them, not as a free pledge of the people's respect and the honour that they bear unto them, but as their own right and due by law, they are a testimony neither of the people's obedience nor of the ministers' dignity, but only of the extreme disorder of all things in religion

Obs. II. It is of great concernment unto us what covenant we do belong unto, as being esteemed to do therein what is done by our representative in our name.—There were never absolutely any more than two covenants; wherein all persons indefinitely are concerned. The first was the covenant of works, made with Adam, and with all in him. And what he did as the head of that covenant, as our representative therein, is imputed unto us, as if we had done it, Rom. 5:12. The other is that of grace, made originally with Christ, and through him with all the elect. And here lie the life and hope of our souls,—that what Christ did as the head of that covenant, as our representative, is all imputed unto us for righteousness and salvation. And certainly there is nothing of more importance unto us, than to know whether of these covenants we belong unto. We are also some way concerned in them by whom the one or the other of these covenant-states is conveyed unto us; for before we make our own personal, voluntary choice, we are by the law of our nature, and of the covenant itself, enclosed in

the same condition with our progenitors as to their covenant-state. And thence it is, that in the severest temporal judgments, children not guilty of the actual transgression of their parents, not having sinned after the similitude of them, by imitation, do yet ofttimes partake of the punishment they have deserved; being esteemed in some manner to have done what they did, so far as they were included in the same covenant with them. And many blessings, on the other hand, are they partakers of who are included in the covenant of those parents who are interested in the covenant of grace; for such parents succeed in the room of Abraham, every one of them. And what Abraham did, as to the administration of the covenant intrusted with him, his posterity, whose representative he was therein, are said to have done in him, as Levi is in this place; and therefore they had the seal of the covenant given unto them in their infancy. And an alteration in this dispensation of grace hath not yet been proved by any, or scarce attempted so to be.

Hebrews 7: 11

In this verse, after so long a preparation and introduction, whereby he cleared his way from objections and secured his future building, the apostle enters on his principal argument concerning the priesthood of Christ, and all the consequences of it, with respect unto righteousness, salvation, and the worship of God, which depend thereon. This being his main design, he would not engage into it before he had in every respect declared and vindicated the dignity and glory of the person of Christ as vested with his blessed offices. And from hence unto the didactical part of the epistle, he proceeds in a retrograde order unto what he had before insisted on. For whereas he had first declared the glory of the person of Christ in his kingly office, chap. 1; then in his prophetical, chap. 2, 3; having now entered on his sacerdotal, he goes on to enlarge upon this last function, then he returns unto his prophetical, and shuts up the whole with a renewed mention of his kingly power, as we shall see in their order and proper places.

Ver. 11.—Εἰ μὲν οὖν τελείωσις διὰ τῆς Λευϊτικῆς ἱερωσύνης ἦν (ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ νενομοθέτητο) τίς ἔτι χρεία, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδὲκ ἕτερον ἀνίτασθαι ἱερέα, καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρών λέγεσθαι;

Τελείωσις. Syr., ܓܡܝܪܘܬܐ, "consummatio," "perfectio;" a sacred "perfection," or completeness of state and condition.

Διὰ τῆς Λευϊτικῆς ἱερωσύνης. Syr., בִּיד כּוּמְרוּתָא דְּלֵוִיָא, "by the hand of the priesthood of Levi himself;" because Levi himself received not the priesthood in his own person, but his posterity. Tremellius renders it "Levitarum," the "priesthood of Levites." The original leaves no scruple, "by the Levitical priesthood,"—the priesthood that was confined to the house, family, tribe, and posterity of Levi.

Ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆ νενομοθέτητο (MS., ἐνενομοθέτητο, corruptly). "Nam sub hoc populo sancita est lex," Beza; "for under it the law was established to the people." "Sub ipso populus legem accepit," "acceperat." Syr., דְּבָהּ סִים נָמוּסָא לְעַמָּא, "by whom" (or "whereby") "the law was imposed upon the people." if דְּבָהּ "by whom," relate unto Levi, the sense is mistaken; and much more by the Arabic, which takes "the law" only for the law of the sacerdotal office, from which it is plainly distinguished. The Ethiopic reads the whole verse to this purpose, "And the people did according to the law of the priesthood which was appointed; what need was there, therefore, that he should give another priest, whose appointment one should say was according to Melchisedec?" which argues the great unskilfulness of that interpreter.

Τίς ἔτι ξρεία, "quid adhuc," "quid amplius opus erat," "esset;" "necessarium fuit;" "what need was there yet," or "moreover." Syr., לְמָנָא, "wherefore;" "ad quid," "to what purpose."

Ἀνίοτασθαι, "oriri;" Beza, "exoriri;" Vulg. Lat., "surgere." Syr., דְּיְקוּם, "should arise." "Oriri," properly. Κατὰ τὴν τάξιν. Syr., בִּדְמוּתֵהּ, "in" or "after the likeness of Melchisedec;" "secundum ordinem."

Καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν λέγεσθαι, "et non secundum ordinem Aaron dici." Syr., אֶמַר דֵּין; which is rendered in the translation in the Polyglot, "sed dixit," "but he said, it shall be" (or "he shall be") "in the likeness of Aaron:" "Dixisset autem," which, regulated by the precedent interrogation, gives us the true sense of the place: "Suppose there must another priest arise, yet if perfection had been by the Levitical priesthood, he would have said that he should be of the order of Aaron."

Ver. 11.—If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Εἰ μὲν οὖν. The first thing in the words is the introduction of the ensuing discourse and argument in these particles of inference, εἰ μὲν οὖν, "if therefore;" 'if things be as we have declared.' He had a peculiar scope and design in all those things. These he is now introducing. The improvement of his whole preceding discourse, and the whole mystery of the priesthood of Melchisedec, he will now make an application of unto the great cause he has in hand. He hath proved, by all sorts of arguments, that the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior unto that of Aaron. Before, he had evinced that there was to be another priest after his order; and this priest must of necessity be greater than all those who went before him of the tribe of Levi, inasmuch as he was so by whom he was represented before the institution of that priesthood. Now he will let the Hebrews know whither all these things do tend in particular, and what doth necessarily follow from and depend upon them. This he lays the foundation of in this verse, and declares in those following. And that they might consider how what he had to say was educed from what he had before proved, he introduceth it with these notes of inference, εἰ μὲν οὖν, "if therefore." And to comprehend the meaning of these words in general, with the design of the apostle in them, we may observe,—

Τελείωσις. 1. That his reasoning in this case is built upon a supposition which the Hebrews could not deny. And this is, that τελείωσις, "perfection," or "consummation," is the end aimed at in the priesthood of the church. That priesthood which perfects or consummates the people, in order unto their acceptance with God and future enjoyment of him, their present righteousness and future blessedness, is that which the church stands in need of, and cannot rest till it comes unto. That priesthood which doth not do so, but leaves men in an imperfect, unconsummate estate, whatever use it may be of for a season, yet it cannot be perpetual unto the exclusion of another. For if so, either God has not designed to consummate his people, or he must do it some other way, and not by a priesthood. The first is contrary to the truth and faithfulness of God in all his promises, yea, would make all religion vain and ludicrous; for if it will never make men perfect, to what end doth it serve, or what must do so in the room thereof? That this should be done any other way than by a priesthood, the Hebrews did neither expect nor believe; for they knew full well that all the ways appointed by the law, to make atonement for sin, to attain righteousness and acceptance with God, depended on the priesthood, and the services of it, in sacrifices and other parts of divine worship. If, therefore, the apostle proves that perfection could not be attained by nor under the Levitical priesthood, it

necessarily follows that there must be some more excellent priesthood remaining as yet to be introduced. This, therefore, he undeniably evinceth by this consideration. For,—

2. Look unto the Levitical priesthood in the days of David and Solomon. Then was that order in its height and at its best; then was the tabernacle first, and afterwards the temple, in their greatest glory, and the worship of God performed with the greatest solemnity. The Hebrews would grant that the priesthood of Levi could never rise to a higher pitch of glory, nor be more useful, than it was in those days. Yet, saith he, it did not then consummate the church; perfection was not then attainable by it. This the Jews might deny, and plead that they desired no more perfection than what was in those days attained unto. Wherefore our apostle proves the contrary; namely, that God designed a perfection or consummation for his church, by a priesthood, that was not then attained. This he doth by the testimony of David himself, who prophesied and foretold that there was to be "another priest, after the order of Melchisedec." For if the perfection of the church was all that God ever aimed at by a priesthood, and if that were attained or attainable by the priesthood in David's time, to what end should another be promised to be raised up, of another order? To have done so, would not have been consistent with the wisdom of God, nor the immutability of his counsel; for unto what purpose should a new priest of another order be raised up to do that which was done before? Wherefore,—

3. The apostle obviates an objection that might be raised against the sense of the testimony produced by him, and his application of it. For it might be said, that though after the institution of the Levitical priesthood there was yet mention of another priest to arise, it might be some eminent person of the same order; such a one as Joshua the son of Josedech, after the captivity, who was eminently serviceable in the house of God, and had eminent dignity thereon, Zech. 3:4–7: so that the defect supposed might be in the persons of the priests, and not in the order of the priesthood. This the apostle obviates, by declaring that if it had been so, he would have been called or spoken of as one of the order of Aaron; but whereas there were two orders of the priesthood, the Melchisedecian and Aaronical, it is expressly said that this other priest should be of the former, and not of the latter.

4. He hath yet a further design, which is, not only to prove the necessity of another priest and priesthood, but thereon also a change and an abrogation of the whole law of worship under the old testament. Hence he here introduceth the mention of the law, as that which was given at the same time with the

priesthood, and had such a relation thereunto, as that of necessity it must stand or fall with it. And this may suffice for a view of the scope of this verse, and the force of the argument contained in it.

We shall now consider the particulars of it:—

Διὰ τῆς Λευϊτικῆς ἱεροσύνης. 1. A supposition is included, that τελείωσις, which we render "perfection," is the adequate and complete end of the office of the priesthood in the church. This, at one time or another, in one order or another, it must attain, or the whole office is useless. And the apostle denies that this could be obtained by the Levitical priesthood. And he calls the priesthood of the law "Levitical," not only because Levi was their progenitor, the patriarch of their tribe, from whom they were genealogized; but also because he would comprise in his assertion not only the house of Aaron, unto whom the right and exercise of the priesthood was limited and confined, but he would also take into consideration the whole Levitical service, which was subservient unto the office of the priesthood, and without which it could not be discharged. Wherefore the "Levitical priesthood" is that priesthood in the family of Aaron which was assisted in all sacerdotal actings and duties by the Levites, who were consecrated of God unto that end. That τελείωσις, or "perfection," was of this priesthood, is denied in a restrictive interrogation. 'If it had been so, it would have been otherwise with respect unto another priest than as it is declared by the Holy Ghost.'

Τελείωσις. 2. Our principal inquiry on this verse will be, what this τελείωσις is, and wherein it doth consist. The word is rendered "perfectio," "consummatio," "consecratio," "sanctificatio," "dedicatio." The original signification and use of the word hath been spoken unto on chap. 2:10, where it is rendered "sanctification." Real and internal sanctification is not intended, but that which is the same with sacred dedication or consecration; for it is plainly distinguished from real inherent sanctification by our apostle, chap. 10:14, Μιᾷ γὰρ προσφορᾷ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους,—"By one offering he hath perfected them that are sanctified." This τελείωσις, the effect and product of τετελείωκεν, is wrought towards them who are "sanctified," and so doth not consist in their sanctification. Much less, therefore, doth it signify an absolute perfection of inherent holiness. Some men no sooner hear the name of "perfection," in the Scripture, but they presently dream of an absolute, sinless, inherent perfection of holiness; which, if they are not utterly blinded and hardened, they cannot but know themselves far enough distant from. But this word hath no such signification. For if it denotes not internal holiness at all, it doth not do so the

perfection of it; nor is any such perfection attainable in this life, as the Scripture everywhere testifies. Wherefore the apostle had no need to prove that it was not attainable by the Levitical priesthood, nor to reflect upon it for that reason, seeing it is not attainable by any other way or means whatever. We must therefore diligently inquire into the true notion of this τελείωσις, or "perfection," which will guide the remaining interpretation of the words. And concerning it we may observe in general,—

First, That it is the effect, or end, or necessary consequent of a priesthood. This supposition is the foundation of the whole argument of the apostle. Now the office and work may be considered two ways: 1. With respect unto God, who is the first immediate object of all the proper acts of that office. 2. With respect unto the church, which is the subject of all the fruits and benefits of its administration.

If we take it in the first way, then the expiation of sin is intended in this word; for this was the great act and duty of the priesthood towards God, namely, to make expiation of sin, or atonement for it by sacrifice. And if we take the word in this sense, the apostle's assertion is most true; for this perfection was never attainable by the Levitical priesthood. It could expiate sin and make atonement only typically, and by way of representation; really and effectually, as to all the ends of spiritual reconciliation unto God and the pardon of sin, they could not do it. For "it was not possible," as our apostle observes, "that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," Heb. 10:4; which he also proves in his ensuing discourse at large. But I do not know that this word is anywhere used in this sense, nor doth it include any such signification. And whereas God is the immediate object of that sacerdotal energy whereby sin is expiated, it is the church that is here said to be perfected; so that expiation of sin cannot be intended thereby, though it be supposed therein. Besides, the apostle doth not here understand sacrifices only, by which alone atonement was made, but all other administrations of the Levitical priesthood whatever.

The Socinians would have expiation of sin here intended; and I shall therefore examine briefly what they speak to this purpose in their comment on this place: " 'Perfectionis,' τελειώσεως, nomine hoc loco nihil aliud intelligit auctor, quàm veram et perfectam expiationem peccatorum, qua non tantum quorundam sed omnium etiam gravissimorum criminum reatus, isque non tantum pœnæ alicujus temporariæ et ad hanc vitam spectantis, sed ipsius æternæ mortis, aufertur, jusque homini vitæ sempiternæ conceditur; qua denique non

tantum reatus omnis omnium peccatorum, sed et ipsa peccata in hominibus tolluntur. Namque his in rebus vera hominum perfectio coram Deo consistit. Si, ergo, hæc perfectio hominibus contingere potuisset per sacerdotium Leviticum, certè nullus fuisset usus novi sacerdotis Melchisedeciani. Sacerdotium enim propter peccatorum expiationem constituitur. At si perfecta peccatorum expiatio contingebat per Aaronicum sacerdotium, quid opus erat novum istum superinducere sacerdotem secundum ordinem Melchisedeci, ut scilicet perageret id, quod peragere potuerat Aaronicus? Quocirca cùm Deus illum constituere voluerit, atque adeò jam constituent; hinc patet nemini, per Leviticum sacerdotium, perfectionem seu perfectam expiationem contigisse, ut certe non contigit. Quorundum enim peccatorum expiatio per illud fiebat, nempe ignorantiarum et infirmitatum; gravium autem peccatorum et scelerum pœna mortis luenda erat. Nec ista expiatio ad tollendam æternam mortem quidquam virium habuit, sed tantum ad tollendas quasdam pœnas temporarias, et huic vitæ proprias. Nec denique illis sacrificiis ulla vis inerat homines ab ipsis peccatis retrahendi."

First, what in general is suited unto the apostle's argument, whatever be the sense of the τελείωσις, here mentioned, is approved. The question is, whether the expiation of sin be here intended, what is the nature of that expiation, and what was the use of the sacrifices under the law? All which on this occasion are spoken unto, and the mind of the Holy Ghost in them all perverted. For, 1. That expiation of sin properly so called, by an act of the priestly office towards God, is not here intended, hath been before declared, both from the signification of the word and the design of the apostle. What these men intend by "the expiation of sin," and how remote it is from that which the Scripture teacheth, and the nature of the thing itself requireth in the reason and common understanding of all mankind, I have fully evinced in the exercitations about the priesthood of Christ. And take "expiation" in the sense of the Scripture, with the common sense and usage of mankind, and in their judgment it was by the Levitical priesthood, and was not by the priesthood of Christ. For it cannot be denied but that the Levitical priests acted towards God, in their offering of sacrifices to make atonement of sin: but that the Lord Christ did so is by these men denied; for that which under this name they ascribe unto him is only the taking away of punishment due unto sin by his power, which power was given him of God upon his ascension or entrance into heaven, as the holy place. 2. They deny that expiation was by the Levitical priesthood, on two grounds: (1.) "Because they did expiate only some lesser sins, as of ignorance and infirmity;"

and so it cannot be said to be by them, because they were only some few sins that they could expiate. (2.) "Because their expiation concerned only deliverance from temporal punishment." That expiation in the Scripture sense could not be really effected by the Levitical priesthood is granted, and shall afterwards be proved. But both these pretended reasons of it are false. For, 1. There was an atonement made in general "for all the sins of the people." For when Aaron made an atonement by the scape-goat, Lev. 16:10, he "confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins," verse 21. And herein the greatest as well as the least of their sins were comprised. For although there were some sins which were capital, according unto the constitutions of their commonwealth,—in which respect there was no sacrifice appointed in particular whereby they who were guilty of them might be freed from punishment, that the ordinances of God might not seem to interfere; yet had they, by their interest in the more general sacrifices, a right unto expiation of sin as to its guilt, for otherwise every one who died penally must of necessity die eternally. 2. It is also false, that their sacrifices had no other use but to free men from temporal punishments. Indeed it is a wild apprehension, that the use of sacrifices in the church of old, to be observed by the people with so great solemnities, and under so great penalties,—wherein the principal actings of faith did consist, as also the great exercise of the spiritual obedience of the whole church,—should serve only to free men from legal, outward, civil, temporal punishments, for lesser sins of ignorance and infirmity; which were none at all, for the most part. Absolutely, indeed, and of themselves, by virtue of their own worth, or by their own innate efficacy, they neither did nor could expiate sin as to its guilt and eternal punishment, which attended all sin by the curse of the law; nor did God ever appoint them for that end: yet they did it relatively and typically; that is, they represented and exhibited unto the faith of the sacrificers that true, effectual Sacrifice to come, whereby all their sins were pardoned and done away. Wherefore, 3. The difference between the expiation of sin by the Levitical priesthood and by Christ did not consist in this, that the one expiated sin only with respect unto temporal punishments, the other with respect unto them that are eternal; but in the manner of their expiation, and the efficacy of each to that end. They expiated sins only typically, doctrinally, and by way of representation; the benefit received from their sacrifices being not contained in them, nor wrought by their causalty, nor procured by their worth or value, but were exhibited unto the faith of the sacrificers, by virtue of their relation unto the sacrifice of Christ. Hence were they of many sorts, and

often repeated; which sufficiently argues that they did not effect what they did represent. But the Lord Christ, by the "one offering of himself," wrought this effect really, perfectly, and absolutely, by its own value and efficacy, according unto the constitution of God. But this is not the perfection here intended by the apostle.

Secondly, This τελείωσις respects the church, which is the subject of all the benefits of the priesthood, and it is that perfect state of the church in this world which God from the beginning designed unto it. He entered upon its erection in the first promise, with respect unto his worship, and the blessed condition of the church itself. Hereon, and with respect hereunto, is the church-state of the old testament said to be weak and imperfect, like that of a child under governors and tutors. Hence also it had a yoke imposed on it, causing fear and bondage; "God having ordained better things for us," or the church under the new testament, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσι, Heb. 11:40,—"that they without us should not be consummated," or made "perfect" in their church-state. And this state of the church is expressed by this word in other places, as we shall see. The foundation of it was laid in that word of our Saviour wherewith he gave up the ghost, Τετέλεσται, John 19:30,—"It is finished," or "completed;" that is, all things belonging unto that great sacrifice whereby the church was to be perfected were accomplished. For he had respect unto all that the prophets had foretold, all that he was to do in this world; and the consummation of the church was to ensue thereon, when "by one offering he for ever perfected them that are sanctified." And those who were thoroughly instructed in the privileges of this church-state, and had a sense of the benefits thereof, are called τέλειοι, "perfect," 1 Cor. 2:6: "We speak wisdom ἐν τοῖς τελείοις,"—the mysteries of the gospel, wherein such persons discerned the wisdom of God. And so are they called, Heb. 5:14. This our Saviour prayed for in the behalf of his church immediately before he procured it by his sacrifice, John 17:23, Ἵνα ὦσι τετελειωμένοι,—"That they may be perfected." And the end of the institution of the ministry of the gospel, to make his mediation effectual unto the souls of men by the application of it in the word unto them, was to bring the church εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, Eph. 4:13,—to "a perfect man," or that perfection of state which it is capable of in this life. So the apostle informs us, that what he aimed at in his ministry, by "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom," was that "he might present πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ," Col. 1:28,—"every man," that is, all believers, "perfect in Christ Jesus." For "in him we are complete," chap. 2:10;—where, though another word be used (πεπληρωμένοι), yet

the same thing is intended; namely, that perfect, complete state of the church, which God designed to bring it unto in Christ. And that our apostle useth the same word in the same sense in sundry places in this epistle we shall see in our progress.

Thirdly, This τελείωσις, or "perfection," may be considered two ways:—

1. As to its absolute completeness in its final issue. This the apostle denies that he himself had as yet attained, Phil. 3:12, ' "Not as though I had already ἔλαβον, "attained," or "received;" namely, the whole of what is purchased for me by Christ; ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι,—"or were already made perfect:' " which could not be without "attaining the resurrection of the dead," verse 11; though the substance be so already in the saints departed; whence he calls them "the spirits of just men τετελειωμένων," Heb. 12:23,—"made perfect." And this he calls absolutely τὸ τέλειον, 1 Cor. 13:10,—"that which is perfect;" or that state of absolute perfection which we shall enjoy in heaven.

2. It may be considered as to its initial state in this world, expressed in the testimonies before cited; and this is that which we inquire after. And the Lord Christ, as the sole procurer of this state, is said to be τελειωτής, the "consummator," the "perfecter," the "finisher of our faith," or religious worship, Heb. 12:2, as having brought us into a state τελειώσεως, "of perfection."

This is that, whatever it be (which we shall immediately inquire into), that is denied unto the Levitical priesthood, and afterwards unto the law, as that which they could not effect. They could not, by their utmost efficacy, nor by the strictest attendance unto them, bring the church into that state of perfection which God had designed for it in this world, and without which the glory of his grace had not been demonstrated.

Fourthly, The chief thing before us, therefore, is to inquire what this state of perfection is, wherein it doth consist, and what is required unto the constitution of it; and in the whole to show that it could not be by the Levitical priesthood or law. Now the things that belong unto it are of two sorts: first, Such as belong unto the souls and consciences of believers,—that is, of the church; and secondly, Such as belong to the worship of God itself. For with respect unto these two doth the apostle discourse, and assert a state of perfection in opposition unto the imperfect state of the church under the law, with respect unto them both. And as unto the first, there are seven things concurring unto the constitution of this state: 1. Righteousness; 2. Peace; 3. Light, or knowledge; 4. Liberty with boldness; 5. A clear prospect into a future state of blessedness; 6.

Joy; 7. Confidence and glorying in the Lord. And the latter, or the worship of the gospel, becomes a part of this state of perfection, 1. By its being spiritual; 2. Easy, as absolutely suited unto the principles of the new creature; 3. In that it is instructive; 4. From its relation unto Christ, as the high priest; 5. From the entrance we have therein into the holy place. In these things consists that state of perfection which the church is called unto under the new testament, which it could never attain by the Levitical priesthood. This is that "kingdom of God" which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. 14:17. But because these things are of great importance, although the particulars are many, I shall briefly consider them all apart.

First, The first thing constituting this gospel-state of perfection, is righteousness. The introduction of all imperfection and weakness in the church was by sin. This made the "law weak," Rom. 8:3, and sinners to be "without strength," chap. 5:6. Wherefore the reduction of perfection must in the first place be by righteousness. This was the great, fundamental promise of the times of the new testament, Isa. 60:21; Ps. 72:7, 85:10, 11. And this was to be brought in by Christ alone. Wherefore one name whereby he was promised unto the church was, "The LORD our Righteousness," Jer. 23:6. Righteousness of our own we had none, nor could any thing in the whole creation supply us with the least of its concerns, with any thing that belongs thereunto; yet without it must we perish for ever. Wherefore Jehovah himself becomes our righteousness, that we might say, "In Jehovah have we righteousness and strength;" and that "in him all the seed of Israel might be justified and glory," Isa. 45:24, 25. For "by him are all that believe justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39. To this end he brought in "everlasting righteousness," Dan. 9:24,—צֶדֶק עוֹלָמִים; not a temporary righteousness, suited unto the עוֹלָם, the "age" of the church under the old covenant, which is often said to be everlasting, in a limited sense; but that which was for all ages,—to make the church blessed unto eternity. So is he "of God made unto us righteousness," 1 Cor. 1:30.

This is the foundation of the gospel τελείωσις, or "perfection;" and it was procured for us by the Lord Christ offering up himself in sacrifice, as our great high priest. For "we have redemption through his blood," even "the forgiveness of sins," Eph. 1:7; God having "set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," Rom. 3:25. And this he is in opposition unto whatever the law could effect, taking away that condemnation which issued from a conjunction of sin and the law: "For

what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," Rom. 8:3, 4. The end of the law in the first place, was to be a means and instrument of righteousness unto those to whom it was given. But after the entrance of sin it became weak, and utterly insufficient unto any such purpose; for "by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified." Wherefore Christ is become "the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth," Rom. 10:4. And by whomsoever this is denied, namely, that Christ is our righteousness,—which he cannot be but by the imputation of his righteousness unto us,—they do virtually overthrow the very foundation of that state of perfection which God designed to bring his church unto. This the Levitical priesthood could not effect, for the reason given in the words following, "For under it the people received the law." It could do no more but what the law could do; but that could not make us righteous, because it was "weak through the flesh;" and by the deeds of the law no man can be justified.

It may be said, that believers had this righteousness under the Levitical priesthood, or they could not have had a "good report through faith," namely, this testimony, "That they pleased God."

Ans. (1.) Our apostle doth not deny it, yea, he proves at large, by manifold instances, Heb. 11, that they had it; only he denies that they had it by virtue of the Levitical priesthood, or any duties of the law He speaks not of the thing itself, with respect unto the persons of believers under the old testament, but of the cause and means of it. What they had of this kind was by virtue of another priesthood, which therefore was to be introduced; and the other, which could not effect it, was therefore to be removed. He denies not perfection unto persons under the Levitical priesthood, but denies that they were made partakers of it thereby.

(2.) They had this righteousness really, and as to the benefits of it; but had it not in such clearness and evidence of its nature, cause, and effects, as it is now revealed in the gospel. Hence, although their interest in it was sufficient to secure their eternal concernments, yet they had it not in such a way as is required unto this τελείωσις in this life. For we know how great a portion of the perfect state of the gospel consists in a clear apprehension that Christ is, and how he is, our righteousness; whereon the main of our present comforts do depend. The great inquiry of the souls of men is, how they may have a

righteousness before God. And the clear discovery of the cause of it, of the way and manner how we are made partakers of it, is a great part of the perfection of the gospel-state.

(3.) It was so obscurely represented unto them, as that the law rose up in a competition with it, or rather, against it, in the minds of the generality of the people. They looked for righteousness "as it were by the works of the law," Rom. 9:32; and on this rock of offence, this stumbling-stone, they shipwrecked their eternal condition, verses 32, 33. For whilst "they went about to establish their own righteousness, they submitted not unto the righteousness of God," Rom. 10:3. And we may easily apprehend how great a snare this proved unto them. For there is in corrupted nature such an opposition and enmity unto this righteousness of God in Christ, and the dictates of the law are so rivetted in the minds of men by nature, that now, after the full and clear declaration of it in the gospel, men are shifting a thousand ways to set up a righteousness of their own in the room of it. How strong, then, must the same inclination be in them who had nothing but the law to guide them, wherein this righteousness was wrapped up under many veils and coverings! Here, therefore, at the last, the body of the people lost themselves, and continue unto this day under the curse of that law which they hoped would justify and save them.

2. Peace is the next thing that belongs unto this gospel-state of perfection. "The kingdom of God is ... peace," Rom. 14:17. To lay the foundation of this kingdom, the Lord Christ both made peace and preached peace, or declared the nature of the peace he had made, tendering and communicating of it unto us, Eph. 2:14, 17. And this peace of evangelical consummation is threefold: (1.) With God; (2.) Between Jews and Gentiles; (3.) In and among ourselves:—

(1.) It is peace with God. This is the first effect and fruit of the righteousness before mentioned, Isa. 32:17. For "being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. 5:1. And hereon depends our peace in the whole creation, above and below. And if we look into the promises of the Old Testament concerning the kingdom of Christ, the greatest part, and the most eminent of them, respect peace with God and the whole creation. All things in the creation were at odds, jarring and interfering continually, upon the entrance of sin. For an enmity thereby being introduced between God and man, it extended itself unto all other creatures that had either dependence on man, or were subservient naturally unto his use, or were put in subjection to him by God, the Lord of all. Hereby were they all cast into a state of vanity and bondage; which they groan under, and as it were look out for a deliverance from, Rom. 8:20–23. But in this

gospel-state God designs a reconciliation of all things, or a reduction of them into their proper order. For "he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he would gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him," Eph. 1:9, 10. The ἀνακεφαλαίωσις here mentioned is the same on the matter with the τελείωσις in this place. God had, in his counsel and purpose, distributed the times or ages of the world into several parts or seasons, with respect unto his own works, and the revelation of his mind and will unto men. See our exposition on chap. 1:1. Every one of these parts or seasons, had its particular οἰκονομία, or "dispensation." But there was a πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν, "a certain time" or "season," wherein all the rest that were past before should have their complement and perfection. And this season had its especial οἰκονομία, or "dispensation" also. And this was the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις mentioned; the peace-making and reconciliation of all things, by gathering up the scattered, divided, jarring parts of the creation into one head, even Christ Jesus. And as this enmity and disorder entered into the whole by the sin of man, so the foundation of this catholic peace and order, from which nothing is excluded but the serpent and his seed, must be laid in peace between God and man. This, therefore, God designed in Christ alone, 2 Cor. 5:20, 21. The first and fundamental work of Christ, as the high priest of the new covenant, was to make peace between God and sinners. And this he did by bringing in of "everlasting righteousness." So was he typed by Melchisedec, "first king of righteousness, then king of peace." For "when we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son," Rom. 5:10. Hence his name was שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם, "the Prince of Peace," Isa. 9:5. Wherefore this reconciliation and peace with God is a great part of this gospel-perfection. So our Saviour testified, John 14:27: "Peace," saith he, "I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Assured peace with God, delivering the souls of his disciples from all trouble and fear, is that which he peculiarly bequeathed unto them. And so great a share in this τελείωσις doth this peace with God, and the consequence of it in peace with the residue of the creation, bear, that the kingdom of Christ is most frequently spoken of under this notion, Isa. 11:4–9, etc. But these things are liable under a double objection. For,—

[1.] Some may complain hereon, ' "Behold, our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts;" for we cannot attain unto this peace with God, being exercised with fears and disconsolations all our days, so as that we seem to have no interest in this gospel-state.' Ans. 1st. Peace is made for all that believe.

2dly. The way of attaining it is laid open unto them, Isa. 27:5. 3dly. Patient abiding in faith will in due time bring them into this peace. 4thly. It is one thing to have peace with God, which all believers have; another to have the constant sense and comfort of it in their own souls, which they may want for a season.

[2.] Some say, they are so far from finding peace with the whole creation, that on all accounts they meet with great enmities in the world. Ans. 1st. It is not said that peace is made for us with Satan and the world, the serpent and his seed. This belongs not unto this perfection. 2dly. Whatever troubles we may have with other things, yet in the issue they shall all work together for our good; which is sufficient to constitute a state of peace.

This part of the perfection of the church could not be attained by the Levitical priesthood. For two things belong thereunto: [1.] That peace be actually made. [2.] That it be fully declared. So the apostle expresseth it as it was effected by Christ, Eph. 2:14, "He is our peace:" and that, 1st. By making peace, "he made peace," verses 15, 16. 2dly. By declaring it, verse 17, "He came and preached peace." Neither of these could be done by the Levitical priesthood. Not the first, it could not make peace; because it could not bring in righteousness, which is the cause and foundation of it, Isa. 32:17; Rom. 5:1. Not the second, it could not declare or preach this peace; for the giving of the law, with all tokens of dread and severity, with the curse annexed unto it, was directly contrary hereunto. This, therefore, was brought in by this better priesthood alone.

(2.) Peace between Jews and Gentiles belongs unto this state; for God designed not the erecting of his kingdom amongst one party or sort of mankind. That it should be otherwise, that the Gentiles should become the children of Abraham, and be made heirs of the promise, was a great mystery under the old testament, Eph. 3:4–6. And we know how slow the disciples of Christ themselves were in the receiving and understanding hereof. But evident it is that this was God's design from the giving of the first promise: and we see now, in the light of the gospel, that he gave many intimations of it unto the church of old; with respect whereunto the veil abideth on the minds of the Jews unto this day. Wherefore without this peace also, the perfect state of the church aimed at could not be attained. But this could never have been brought about by the Levitical priesthood and the law; for they were indeed the principal occasion of the distance between them, and the means of the continuance of their disagreement. And that which the Jews thought to have been the principal advantage and privilege of Abraham in his posterity, was that which, whilst it

continued, kept him from the actual possession of his greatest glory, in being "the heir of the world," and a "father of a multitude of nations." Nor, whilst that priesthood was standing, could Japheth be persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem. Hence this peace was so far from being the effect of the Levitical priesthood and the law, as that it could not be introduced and established until they were both taken out of the way, as our apostle expressly declares, Eph. 2:14–16. The last issue of this contest came unto these two heads: [1.] Whether the Gentiles should at all be called unto the faith of the gospel. [2.] Whether, being called, they should be obliged unto the observation of the law of Moses. The first fell out among the apostles themselves, but was quickly determined by our Lord Jesus Christ, unto their joy and satisfaction. And this he did two ways: 1st. By sending Peter to preach the gospel unto Cornelius, and thereon bestowing the Holy Ghost on them that did believe, Acts 10, 11:17, 18. 2dly. By giving Paul an open, full commission to go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel unto them, Acts 22:21, 26:15–18. Here the body of the people of the Jews fell off with rage and madness. But the other part of the controversy was of longer continuance. The Jews, finding that the Gentiles were by the gospel brought so near unto them as to turn from dumb idols unto God, and to receive the promise no less than themselves, would by all means have brought them over unto the obedience of the law of Moses also. This yoke the Gentiles being greatly afraid of, were in no small perplexity of mind what to do. The gospel they were resolved to embrace, but were very unwilling to take on them the yoke of the law. Wherefore the Holy Ghost in the apostles at length puts an issue unto this difference also, and lets the church know, that indeed the "wall of partition was broken down," the "law of commandments contained in ordinances was taken away," and that the Gentiles were not to be obliged unto the observation of it; which they greatly rejoiced in, Acts 15:31. Other way there was none for the reconciliation of those parties, who had been at so long and so great a variance.

It will be said, that we yet see a variance between Jews and Gentiles continued all the world over; and that they are in all places mutually an abomination unto each other. And it is true it is so, and is likely so to continue; for there is no remedy that can be so effectual to heal a distemper, or make up a fracture, as that it will work its cure without use or application. The gospel is not at all concerned in what state and condition men are who reject it, and refuse to believe it. They may still live in enmity and malice, hateful, and hating one another. But where it is believed, embraced, and submitted unto, there an

absolute end is put unto all difference or enmity between Jews and Gentiles, as such, seeing all are made one in Christ. And this τελείωσις belongs only unto them who do obey the gospel.

(3.) Peace among ourselves, that is, among believers, doth also belong hereunto. There was peace and brotherly love required under the law. But no duty receiveth a greater improvement under the gospel. The purchase of it by the blood of Christ, his prayer for it, the new motive added unto it, the communication of it as the legacy of Christ unto his disciples, with the especial ends and duties of it, do constitute it a part of the perfect state of the church under the gospel.

3. The third thing wherein this τελείωσις, or "perfection," doth consist, is spiritual light and knowledge with respect unto the mysteries of the wisdom and grace of God. God had designed for the church a measure of spiritual light and knowledge which was not attainable under the law; which is the subject of that great promise, Jer. 31:34, whose accomplishment is declared, 1 John 2:27. And there are three things which concur unto the constitution of this privilege: —

(1.) The principal revealer of the mind and will of God. Under the law God made use of the ministry of men unto this purpose, as of Moses and the prophets. And he employed also, both in the erection of the church-state and in sundry particulars afterwards, the ministry of angels, as our apostle declares, Heb. 2:2. And in some sense that state was thereby "put in subjection unto angels," verse 5. But this ministry, and the dispensation of light and knowledge thereby, could not render it complete; yea, it was an argument of the darkness and bondage under which it was. For there was yet one greater than they all, and above them all, one more intimately acquainted with God and all the counsels of his will, by whom he would speak forth his mind, Deut. 18:18, 19. This was the Son of God himself, without whose immediate ministry the consummation of the church-state could not be attained. This consideration our apostle insists upon at large in the first chapter, and the beginning of the second, concluding from thence the pre-eminence of the evangelical state above the legal. The especial nature whereof we have declared in the exposition of those places. A most eminent privilege this was, yea, the highest outward privilege that the church is capable of, and it eminently concurs unto its perfection. For whether we consider the dignity of his person, or the perfect knowledge and comprehension that he had of the whole counsel of God and the mysteries of his grace, it incomparably exalts the present church-state above

that of old; whence our apostle draws many arguments unto the necessity of our obedience above what they were urged withal. See Heb. 2:2, 3, 12:25. And this full revelation of his counsels by the ministry of his Son, God did reserve, partly that he might have a pre-eminence in all things, and partly because none other either did or could comprehend the mysteries of it as it was now to be revealed. See John 1:18.

(2.) The matter or things themselves revealed. There was under the Levitical priesthood "a shadow of good things to come," but no perfect image or complete delineation of them, Heb. 10:1. They had the first promise, and the enlargements of it unto Abraham and David. Sundry expositions were also added unto them, relating unto the manner of their accomplishment; and many intimations were given of the grace of God thereby. But all this was done so darkly, so obscurely, so wrapped up in types, shadows, figures, and allegories, as that no perfection of light or knowledge was to be obtained. The mystery of them continued still "hid in God," Eph. 3:9. Hence the doctrines concerning them are called "parables and dark sayings," Ps. 78:2. Neither did the prophets themselves see into the depth of their own predictions, 1 Pet. 1:11, 12. Hence the believing church waited with earnest expectation, "until the day should break, and the shadows should flee away," Cant. 2:17, 4:6. They longed for the breaking forth of that glorious light which the Son of God was to bring, attending in the meantime unto the word of prophecy, which was as the light of a candle unto them shining in a dark place. They lived on that great promise, Mal. 4:2. They expected righteousness, light, and grace, but knew not the way of them. Hence their prophets, righteous men, and kings, desired to see the things of the gospel, and saw them not, Matt. 13:17; Luke 10:24. And therefore John the Baptist, though he was greater than any of the prophets, because he saw and owned the Son of God as come in the flesh, which they desired to see, and saw not; yet, living and dying under the Levitical priesthood, not seeing "life and immortality brought to light by the gospel," the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he in spiritual knowledge. Wherefore it belonged unto the τελείωσις, or perfect state of the church, that there should be a full and plain revelation and declaration made of the whole counsel of God, of the mystery of his will and grace, as the end of those things which were to be done away. And this is done in the gospel, under that new priesthood which was to be introduced. Nor without this priesthood could it be so made; for the principal part of the mystery of God depends on, consists in the discharge of the office of that priesthood. It does so on its oblation and intercession, the atonement made

for sin, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness thereby. The plain revelation of these things, which could not be made before their actual accomplishment, is a great part of this gospel perfection. This the apostle disputes at large, 2 Cor. 3 from verse 7 to the end of the chapter.

(3.) The inward spiritual light of the minds of believers, enabling them to discern the mind of God, and the mysteries of his will as revealed, doth also belong unto this part of the perfection of the gospel church-state. This was promised under the old testament, Isa. 11:9, 54:13; Jer. 31:34. And although it was enjoyed by the saints of old, yet was it so in a very small measure and low degree, in comparison with what it is now, after the plentiful effusion of the Spirit. See 1 Cor. 2:11, 12. This is that which is prayed for, Eph. 1:17–19, 3:18, 19.

Wherefore this head of the τελείωσις, or "perfection" intended, consists in three things: (1.) The personal ministry of Christ in the preaching of the gospel, or declaration of the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in himself. (2.) The dispensation or mission of the Holy Ghost, to reveal and fully make known the same mystery by the apostles and prophets of the new testament, Eph. 3:5. (3.) The effectual illumination of the minds of them that do believe, enabling them spiritually to discern the mysteries so revealed, every one according to the measure of his gift and grace. See concerning it, 1 Pet. 2:9; Eph. 3:16–19, 5:8.

4. There belongs unto this perfection that παῤῥησία, that "liberty and boldness," which believers have in their approaches unto God. This is frequently mentioned as an especial privilege and advantage of the gospel-state, Eph. 3:12; Heb. 3:6, 4:16, 10:19, 35; 1 John 3:21, 4:17, 5:14. And, on the contrary, the state under the Levitical priesthood is described as a state of fear and bondage; that is, comparatively, Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 2:15. And this bondage or fear arose from sundry causes inseparable from that priesthood and the administration of it; as,—

(1.) From the dreadful manner of giving the law. This filled the whole people with terror and amazement. Upon the administration of the Spirit by the gospel, believers do immediately cry, "Abba, Father," Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6. They have the liberty and boldness to draw nigh unto God, and to call him Father. But there was such an administration of a spirit of dread and terror in the giving of the law, as that the people were not able to bear the approaches of God unto them, nor the thought of an access unto him. And therefore they desired that all things for the future might be transacted by an internuncius,—one that might go between God and them, whilst they kept at their distance, Deut. 5:23–

27. When any first hear the law, they are afraid of God, and desire nothing more than not to come near him. They would be saved by a distance from him. When any first hear the gospel,—that is, so as to believe it,—their hearts are opened with love to God, and all their desire is, to be near unto him, to draw nigh unto his throne. Hence it is called "the joyful sound." Nothing can be more opposite than these two frames. And this spirit of fear and dread, thus first given out in the giving of the law, was communicated unto them in all their generations, whilst the Levitical priesthood continued. For as there was nothing to remove it, so itself was one of the ordinances provided for its continuance. This are we now wholly delivered from. See Heb. 12:18–21.

(2.) It arose from the revelation of the sanction of the law in the curse. Hereby principally "the law gendered unto bondage," Gal. 4:24; for all the people were in some sense put under the curse, namely, so far as they would seek for righteousness by the works of the law. So saith our apostle, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," Gal. 3:10. This curse was plainly and openly denounced as due to the breach of the law, as our apostle adds, "It is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And all their capital punishments were representations thereof. This could not but take a deep impression on their minds, and render them obnoxious unto bondage. Hence, although on the account of the promise they were heirs, yet by the law they were made as servants, and kept in fear, Gal. 4:1. Neither had they such a prospect into the nature and signification of their types as to set them at perfect liberty from this cause of dread. For as there was a veil on the face of Moses,—that is, all the revelations of the mind and will of God by him were veiled with types and shadows,—so there was a veil on their hearts also, in the weakness of their spiritual light, that "they could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished," 2 Cor. 3:13; that is, unto Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth," Rom. 10:4. It was therefore impossible but that their minds must ordinarily be filled with anxiety and fear. But there is now no more curse, in the gospel-state, Rev. 22:3. The curse abideth only on the serpent and his seed, Isa. 65:25. The blessing of the promise doth wholly possess the place of it, Gal. 3:13, 14. Only they who will choose still to be under the law, by living in the sins that it condemneth, or seeking for righteousness by the works which it commands, are under the curse.

(3.) Under the Levitical priesthood, even their holy worship was so appointed and ordered as to keep them partly in fear, and partly at a distance from the presence of God. The continual multiplication of their sacrifices, one day after another, one week after another, one month after another, one year after another, taught them that by them all there was not an end made of sin, nor everlasting righteousness brought in by any of them. This argument our apostle makes use of to this purpose, Heb. 10:1: "The law," saith he, "could never by those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι,"—bring the worshippers unto this perfection. And he gives this reason for it, namely, because they had still a "conscience of sins;" that is, a conscience condemning them for sin: and therefore there was a "remembrance made of sins again every year," verses 2, 3. Hereby they were kept in dread and fear. And in their worship they were minded of nothing so much as their distance from God, and that they had not as yet a right to an immediate access unto him. For they were not so much as once to come into the holiest, where were the pledges and tokens of God's presence. And the prohibitions of their approaches unto God were attended with such severe penalties, that the people cried out they were not able to bear them, Num. 17:12, 13; which Peter reflects upon, Acts 15:10. "The Holy Ghost thereby signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing," Heb. 9:8. No man had yet right to enter into it with boldness; which believers now have, Heb. 10:19, 20.

(4.) God had designed the whole dispensation of the law under that priesthood unto this very end, that it should give the people neither rest nor liberty, but press and urge them to be looking after their full relief in the promised Seed, Gal. 4:1, 2, 3:24. It pressed them with a sense of sin, and with a yoke of ceremonial observances, presenting them with the "hand-writing of ordinances which was against them," Col. 2:14. It urged their consciences not to seek after rest in or by that state. Here could be no perfection, because there could be no liberty.

The παῤῥησία, or "boldness" we speak of, is opposed unto all these causes of bondage and fear. It was not the design of God always to keep the church in a state of non-age, and under schoolmasters; he had appointed to set it at liberty in the fulness of time, to take his children nearer unto him, to give them greater evidences of his love, greater assurances of the eternal inheritance, and the use of more liberty and boldness in his presence. But what this παῤῥησία of the gospel is, wherein it doth consist, what is included in it, what freedom of

spirit, what liberty of speech, what right of access and boldness of approach unto God, built upon the removal of the law, the communication of the Spirit, the way made into the holiest by the blood of Christ, with other concernments of it, constitutive of gospel perfection, I have already in part declared, in our exposition on chap. 3:6, and must, if God please, yet more largely insist upon it, on chap. 10; so that I shall not here further speak unto it.

5. A clear foresight into a blessed estate of immortality and glory, with unquestionable evidences and pledges giving assurance of it, belongs also to this consummation. Death was originally threatened as the final end and issue of sin. And the evidence hereof was received under the Levitical priesthood, in the curse of the law. There was, indeed, a remedy provided against its eternal prevaleney, in the first promise. For whereas death comprised all the evil that was come, or was to come on man for sin,—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,"—the promise contained the means of deliverance from it, or it was no promise, tendered no relief unto man in the state whereinto he was fallen. But the people under the law could see but little into the manner and way of its accomplishment, nor had they received any pledge of it, in any one that was dead, and lived again so as to die no more. Wherefore their apprehensions of this deliverance were dark, and attended with much fear; which rendered them obnoxious unto bondage. See the exposition on chap. 2:14, 15, where we have declared the dreadful apprehensions of the Jews concerning death, received by tradition from their fathers. They could not look through the dark shades of death, into light, immortality, and glory. See the two-fold spirit of the old and new testaments with respect unto the apprehensions of death expressed; the one, Job 10:21, 22; the other, 2 Cor. 5:1–4. But there is nothing more needful unto the perfect state of the church. Suppose it endowed with all possible privileges in this world, yet if it have not a clear view and prospect with a blessed assurance of immortality and glory after death, its condition will be dark and uncomfortable. And as this could not be done without the bringing in of another priesthood, so by that of Christ it is accomplished. For,—

(1.) He himself died as our high priest. He entered into the devouring jaws of death, and that as it was threatened in the curse. And now is the trial to be made. If he who thus ventured on death as threatened in the curse, and that for us, be swallowed up by it, or detained by its power and pains, there is a certain end of all our hopes. Whatever we may arrive unto in this world, death will convey us over into eternal ruin. But if he break through its power, have the

pains of it removed from him, do swallow it up in victory, and rise triumphantly into immortality and glory; then is our entrance into them also, even by and after death, secured. And in the resurrection of Christ the church had the first unquestionable evidence that death might be conquered, that it and the curse might be separated, that there might be a free passage through it into life and immortality. These things originally and in the first covenant were inconsistent, nor was the reconciliation of them evident under the Levitical priesthood; but hereby was the veil rent from top to bottom, and the most holy place not made with hands laid open unto believers. See Isa. 25:7, 8.

(2.) As by his death, resurrection, and entrance into glory, he gave a pledge, example, and evidence unto the church of that in his own person which he had designed for it; so the grounds of it were laid in the expiatory sacrifice which he offered, whereby he took away the curse from death. There was such a close conjunction between death and the curse, such a combination between sin, the law, and death, that the breaking of that conjunction, and the dissolving of that combination, was the greatest effect of divine wisdom and grace; which our apostle so triumpheth in, 1 Cor. 15:54–57. This could no otherwise be brought about but by his being made a curse in death, or bearing the curse which was in death, in our stead, Gal. 3:13.

(3.) He hath clearly declared, unto the utmost of our capacities in this world, that future state of blessedness and glory which he will lead all his disciples into. All the concernments hereof, under the Levitical priesthood, were represented only under the obscure types and shadows of earthly things. But he hath "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," 2 Tim. 1:10. He destroyed and abolished him who had the power of death, in taking away the curse from it, Heb. 2:14. And he abolished death itself, in the removal of those dark shades which it cast on immortality and eternal life; and hath opened an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God and glory. He hath unveiled the uncreated beauties of the King of glory, and opened the everlasting doors, to give an insight into those mansions of rest, peace, and blessedness which are prepared for believers in the everlasting enjoyment of God. And these things constitute no small part of that consummate state of the church which God designed, and which the Levitical priesthood could no way effect.

6. There is also an especial joy belonging unto this state; for this kingdom of God is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Neither was this attainable by the Levitical priesthood. Indeed many of the saints of the old

testament did greatly rejoice in the Lord, and had the joy of his salvation abiding with them. See Ps. 51:12; Isa. 25:9; Hab. 3:17, 18. But they had it not by virtue of the Levitical priesthood. Isaiah tells us that the ground of it was the "swallowing up of death in victory," chap. 25:8; which was no otherwise to be done but by the death and resurrection of Christ. It was by an influence of efficacy from the priesthood that was to be introduced that they had their joy: whence "Abraham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced to see it." The prospect of the day of Christ was the sole foundation of all their spiritual joy, that was purely so. But as unto their own present state, they were allowed and called to rejoice in the abundance of temporal things; though the psalmist, in a spirit of prophecy, prefers the joy arising from the light of God's countenance in Christ above all of that sort, Ps. 4:6, 7. But ordinarily their joy was mixed and alloyed with a respect unto temporal things. See Lev. 23:39–41; Deut. 12:11, 12, 18, 16:11, 27:7. This was the end of their annual festivals. And those who would introduce such festival rejoicings into the gospel-state do so far degenerate unto Judaism, as preferring their natural joy, in the outward manner of expression, before the spiritual, ineffable joys of the gospel. This it is that belongs unto the state thereof:—such a joy in the Lord as carrieth believers with a holy triumph through every condition, even when all outward causes of joy do fail and cease. A joy it is "unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. 1:8. See John 15:11; Rom. 15:13; Jude 24. It is that inexpressible satisfaction which is wrought in the minds of believers by the Holy Ghost, from an evidence of their interest in the love of God by Christ, with all the fruits of it, present and to come, with a spiritual sense and experience of their value, worth, and excellency. This gives the soul a quiet repose in all its trials, refreshment when it is weary, peace in trouble, and the highest satisfaction in the hardest things that are to be undergone for the profession of the name of Christ, Rom. 5:1–5.

7. Confidence and glorying in the Lord is also a part of this perfection. This is the flowering or the effect and fruit of joy; a readiness unto, and the way whereby we do express it. One great design of the gospel is to exclude all boasting, all glorying in any thing of self in religion, Rom. 3:27. It is by the gospel, and the law of faith therein, that men are taught not to boast or glory, neither in outward privileges nor in moral duties. See Phil. 3:5–9; Rom. 3:27, 28, 4:2. What, then? is there no glorying left us in the profession of the gospel, no triumph, no exultation of spirit, but we must always be sad and cast down,—at best stand but on even terms with our oppositions, and never rejoice over them? Yes, there is a greater and more excellent glorying introduced than the heart of

man on any other account is capable of. But God hath so ordered all things now, "that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth should glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. 1:29, 31. And what is the reason or foundation hereof? It is this alone, that we are "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," verse 30. So it was promised of old, that "in the LORD,"—that is, "The LORD our Righteousness,"—"all the seed of Israel should be justified and glory," Isa. 45:25. This is that καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος which we have opened on chap. 3:6, 14, whither the reader is referred. It is that triumphant exultation of spirit which ariseth in believers, from their absolute preferring their interest in heavenly things above things present, so as to contemn and despise whatever is contrary thereunto, however tendered, in a way of allurement or rage.

In these things, and others of the like nature and kind, consists that τελείωσις, or "consummation" of the state of the church as to the persons of the worshippers, which the apostle denies to have been attainable by or under the Levitical priesthood. The arguments wherewith he confirms his assertion ensue in the verses following, where they must be further considered. But we may not proceed without some observations for our own edification in this matter:—

Obs. I. An interest in the gospel consisteth not in an outward profession of it, but in a real participation of those things wherein the perfection of its state doth consist.—Men may have a form of godliness, and yet be utter strangers to the power of it. Multitudes in all ages have made, and do make a profession of the gospel, who yet have no experience in themselves of the real benefits and advantages wherewith it is accompanied. All that they obtain hereby is but to deceive their souls into eternal ruin. For they live in some kind of expectation, that in another world they shall obtain rest, and blessedness, and glory by it; but the gospel will do nothing for them hereafter, in things eternal, who are not here partakers of its power and fruits in things spiritual.

Obs. II. The pre-eminence of the gospel-state above the legal is spiritual, and undiscernible unto a carnal eye.—For, 1. It is evident that the principal design of the apostle, in all these discourses, is to prove the excellency of the state of the church under the new testament, in its faith, liberty, and worship, above that of the church under the old. And, 2. That he doth not in any of them produce instances of outward pomp, ceremonies, or visible glory, in the confirmation of his assertion. He grants all the outward institutions and ordinances of the law, insisting on them, their use, and signification, in particular; but he opposeth not unto them any outward, visible glory in gospel administrations. 3. In 2 Cor.

3 he expressly compares those two administrations of the law and the gospel, as unto their excellency and glory. And first, he acknowlegeth that the administration of the law, in the institution and celebration of it, was glorious, verses 9–11; but withal he adds, that it had no glory in comparison with that under the new testament, which doth far excel it. Wherein, then, doth this glory consist? He tells us it doth so in this, in that it is the "administration of the Spirit:" verse 8, "How shall not the administration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" He doth not resolve it into outward order, the beauty and pomp of ceremonies and ordinances. In this alone it doth consist, in that the whole dispensation of it is carried on by the grace and gifts of the Spirit; and that they are also administered thereby. 'This,' saith he, 'is glory and liberty, such as excel all the glories of old administrations.' 4. In this place he sums it up all in this, that the "perfection" we have treated of was effected by the gospel, and could not be so by the Levitical priesthood and the whole law of commandments contained in ordinances. In these spiritual things, therefore, are we to seek after the glory of the gospel, and its pre-eminence above the law. And those who suppose they render the dispensation of the gospel glorious by vying with the law in ceremonies and an external pomp of worship, as doth the church of Rome, do wholly cross his design. And therefore,—

Secondly, This τελείωσις, or "perfection," respects the worship of the gospel as well as the persons of the worshippers, and the grace whereof they are made partakers. God had designed the church unto a more perfect state in point of worship than it was capable of under the Levitical priesthood. Nor, indeed, could any man reasonably think, or wisely judge, that he intended the institutions of the law as the complete, ultimate worship and service that he would require or appoint in this world, seeing our natures, as renewed by grace, are capable of that which is more spiritual and sublime. For,—

1. They were in their nature "carnal," as our apostle declares, verse 16, and chap. 9:10. The subject of them all, the means of their celebration, were carnal things,—beneath those pure spiritual acts of the mind and soul, which are of a more noble nature. They consisted in meats and drinks, the blood of bulls and goats, the observation of moons and festivals, in a temple made of wood and stone, gold and silver,—things carnal, perishing, and transitory. Certainly God, who is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, designed at one time or other a worship more suited unto his own nature, though the imposition of these things on the church for a season was necessary. And as they were carnal, so they might be exactly performed by men of carnal minds, and

were so for the most part; in which respect God himself speaks often with a great undervaluation of them. See Ps. 50:8–13; Isa. 1:11–14. Had not he designed the renovation of our natures into his own image, a new creation of them by Jesus Christ, this carnal worship might have sufficed, and would have been the best we are capable of. But to suppose that he should endow men, as he doth by Christ, with a new, spiritual, supernatural principle, enabling them unto a more sublime and spiritual worship, it cannot be imagined that he would always bind them up unto those carnal ordinances in their religious service. And the reason is, because they were not a meet and sufficient means for the exercise of that new principle of faith and love which he bestows on believers by Jesus Christ. Yea, to burden them with carnal observances, is a most effectual way to take them off from its exercise in his service. And so it is at this day; where-ever there is a multiplication of outward services and observances, the minds of men are so taken up with the bodily exercise about them, as that they cannot attend unto the pure internal actings of faith and love.

2. What by their number, and what by their nature and the manner of exacting of them, they were made a yoke which the people were never able to bear with any joy or satisfaction, Acts 15:10. And this yoke lay partly, in the first place, on their consciences, or the inner man. And it consisted principally in two things: (1.) The multitude of ceremonies and institutions did perplex them, and gave them no rest; seeing which way soever they turned themselves, one precept or other, positive or negative, "touch not, taste not, handle not," was upon them. (2.) The veil that was on them, as to their use, meaning, and end, increased the trouble of this yoke. "They could not see unto the end of the things that were to be done away," because of the veil; nor could they apprehend fully the reason of what they did. And it may be easily conceived how great a yoke it was, to be bound unto the strict observation of such rites and ceremonies in worship; yea, that the whole of their worship should consist in such things as those who made use of them did not understand the end and meaning of them. And, secondly, it lay on their persons, from the manner of their imposition; as they were tied up unto days, times, and hours, so their transgression or disobedience made them obnoxious to all sorts of punishments, and excision itself. For they were all bound upon them with a curse; whence "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward," Heb. 2:2. For "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy," Heb. 10:28; which they complained of, Num. 17:12, 13. This put them on continual scrupulous fears, with endless inventions of their own to secure themselves from the guilt of such

transgressions. Hence the religion of the Jews at present is become a monstrous confused heap of vain inventions and scrupulous observances of their own, to secure themselves, as they suppose, from transgressing any of those which God had given them. Take any one institution of the law, and consider what is the exposition they give of it in their Mishna, by their oral tradition, and it will display the fear and bondage they are in; though the remedy be worse than the disease. Yea, by all their inventions they did but increase that which they endeavoured to avoid; for they have brought things unto that pass among them, that it is impossible that any one of them should have satisfaction in his conscience that he hath aright observed any of God's institutions, although he should suppose that he requireth nothing of him but the outward performance of them.

3. Their instructive efficacy, which is the principal end of the ordinances of divine worship, was weak, and no way answered the power and evidence of gospel institutions, Heb. 10:1. Therefore was the way of teaching by them intricate, and the way of learning difficult. Hence is that difference which is put between the teachings under the old testament and the new. For now it is promised that men "shall not teach every man his brother, and every man his neighbour, saying, Know the LORD," as it was of old. The means of instruction were so dark and cloudy, having only "a shadow of the things" themselves that were to be taught, and "not the very image of them," that it was needful that they should be continually inculcated, to keep up the knowledge of the very rudiments of religion. Besides, they had many ordinances, rites, and ceremonies imposed on them, to increase their yoke, whereof they understood nothing but only that it was the sovereign pleasure and will of God that they should observe them, though they understood not of what use they were: and they were obliged unto no less an exact observance of them than they were unto that of those which were the clearest and most lightsome.

The best direction they had from them and by them was, that indeed there was nothing in them—that is, in their nature or proper efficacy—to produce or procure those good things which they looked for through them, but they only pointed unto what was to come. Wherefore they knew that although they exercised themselves in them with diligence all their days, yet by virtue of them they could never attain what they aimed at; only there was something signified by them, and afterwards to be introduced, that was efficacious of what they looked after. Now unto the strict observation of these things were the people obliged, under the most severe penalties, and that all the days of their lives. And

this increased their bondage. God, indeed, by his grace, did influence the minds of true believers among them unto satisfaction in their obedience, helping them to adore that sovereignty and wisdom which they believed to be in all his institutions; and he gave unto them really the benefits of the good things that were for to come, and that were prefigured by their services; but the state wherein they were, by reason of these things, was a state of bondage. Nor could any relief be given in this state unto the minds or consciences of men by the Levitical priesthood; for it was itself the principal cause of all these burdens and grievances, in that the administration of all sacred things was committed thereunto.

The apostle takes it here for granted that God designed a τελείωσις, or state of perfection, unto the church; and that as unto its worship as well as unto its faith and obedience. We find, by the event, that it answered not the divine wisdom and goodness to bind up the church, during its whole sojourn in this world, unto a worship so carnal, burdensome, so imperfect, so unsuited to express his grace and kindness towards it, or its sense thereof. And who can but pity the woful condition of the present Jews, who can conceive of no greater blessedness than the restoration of this burdensome service? So true is it what the apostle says, the veil is upon them unto this present day; yea, blindness is on their minds, that they can see no beauty but only in things carnal: and like their forefathers, who preferred the bondage of Egypt, because of their flesh-pots, before all the liberty and blessings of Canaan; so do they their old bondage-state, because of some temporal advantages it was attended withal, before the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

In opposition hereunto, there is a worship under the gospel which hath such properties as are constitutive also of this perfection. By gospel-worship, I understand the whole way and order of that solemn worship of God which the Lord Christ hath commanded to be observed in his churches, with all the ordinances and institutions of it; and all the private worship of believers, in their whole access unto God. The internal glory and dignity of this worship must be referred unto its proper place, which is chap. 10:19–22. Here I shall only mention some few things wherein its excellency consists, in opposition unto the defects of that under the law, on the account whereof it is constitutive of that evangelical perfection whereof we treat:—

1. It is spiritual; which is the subject of the apostle's discourse, 2 Cor. 3:6–9, etc. And it is so on a twofold account: (1.) In that it is suited unto the nature of God, so as that thereby he is glorified as God. For "God is a spirit," and will be

"worshipped in spirit;" which our Saviour asserts to belong unto the gospel-state, in opposition unto all the most glorious carnal ordinances and institutions of the law, John 4:21–24. So is it opposed unto the old worship as it was carnal. It was that which, in and by itself, answered not the nature of God, though commanded for a season. See Ps. 50:8–14. (2.) Because it is performed merely by the aids, supplies, and assistances of the Spirit, as it hath been at large proved elsewhere.

2. It is easy and gentle, in opposition unto the burden and insupportable yoke of the old institutions and ordinances. That so are all the commands of Christ unto believers, the whole system of his precepts, whether for moral obedience or worship, himself declares: "Take my yoke upon you," saith he, "and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," Matt. 11:29, 30. So the apostle tells us that "his commandments are not grievous," 1 John 5:3. But yet concerning this ease of gospel-worship some things must be observed:—

(1.) As to the persons unto whom it is so easy and pleasant. And it is so only unto them who, being "weary and heavy laden," do come unto Christ that they may have rest, and do learn of him; that is, unto convinced, humbled, converted sinners, that do believe in him. Unto all others, who on mere convictions, or by other means, do take it upon them, it proves an insupportable burden, and that which they cannot endure to be obliged unto. Hence the generality of men, although professing the Christian religion, are quickly weary of evangelical worship, and do find out endless inventions of their own, wherewith they are better satisfied, in their divine services. Therefore have they multiplied ceremonies, fond superstitions, and downright idolatries, which they prefer before the purity and simplicity of the worship of the gospel;—as it is in the church of Rome. And the reason hereof is, that enmity which is in their minds against the spiritual things represented and exhibited in that worship. For there being so near an alliance between those things and this worship, they that hate the one cannot but despise the other. Men of unspiritual minds cannot delight in spiritual worship. It is therefore,—

(2.) Easy unto believers, on the account of that principle wherewith they are acted in all divine things. This is the new nature, or new creature in them, wherein their spiritual life doth consist. By this they delight in all spiritual things in the inner man, because they are cognate and suitable thereunto. Weariness may be upon the flesh, but the spirit will be willing. For as the principle of corrupted nature goeth out with delight and vehemency unto

objects that are unto its satisfaction, and unto all the means of its conjunction unto them and union with them; so the principle of grace in the heart of believers is carried with delight and fervency unto those spiritual things which are its proper object, and therewithal unto the ways and means of conjunction with them and union unto them. And this is the proper life and effect of evangelical worship. It is the means whereby grace in the soul is conjoined and united unto grace in the word and promises; which renders it easy and pleasant unto believers, so that they delight to be exercised therein.

(3.) The constant aid they have in and for its performance, if they be not wanting unto themselves, doth entitle it unto this property. The institution of gospel-worship is accompanied with the administration of the Spirit, Isa. 59:21; and he συναντιλαμβάνεται, "helpeth" and assisteth in all the worship of it, as was intimated before.

(4.) The benefit which they receive by it renders it easy and pleasant unto them. For all the ordinances of evangelical worship are of that nature, and appointed of God unto that end, so as to excite, increase, and strengthen grace in the worshippers; as also, to convey and exhibit a sense of the love and favour of God unto their souls. And in these two things consists the principal interest of all believers in this world, nor have they any design in competition with that of increasing in them. Finding, therefore, how by the diligent attendance unto this worship, they thrive in both parts of their interest, it cannot but be pleasant unto them.

(5.) The outward rites of it are few, lightsome, easy to be observed, without scrupulous, tormenting fears, nor such as, by attendance unto bodily services, do divert the mind from that communion with God which they are a means of.

3. It is instructive, and that with clearness and evidence of the things which we are to know and learn. This was a great part of the imperfection of legal institutions, that they taught the things which they signified and represented obscurely, and the mind of God in them was not learned but with much difficulty; no small part of their obedience consisting in a resignation of their understandings unto God's sovereignty, as to the use and the end of the things wherein they were exercised in his worship. But all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel do give light into, and exhibit the things themselves unto the minds and faith of believers. Hereon they discern the reasons and grounds of their use and benefit; whence our whole worship is called our "reasonable service," Rom. 12:1. Thus in the preaching of the word, "Jesus Christ

is evidently set forth, crucified among us," Gal. 3:1; not darkly represented in types and shadows. And in the sacrament of the supper we do plainly "show forth his death till he come," 1 Cor. 11:26. And the like may be said of all other evangelical institutions. And the principal reason hereof is, because they do not represent or shadow things to come, no, nor yet things absent, as did those of old; but they really present and exhibit spiritual things, Christ and the benefits of his mediation, unto our souls. And in the observance of them we are not kept at a distance, but have an admission unto the holy place not made with hands; because Christ, who is the minister of that holy sanctuary, is in them and by them really present unto the souls of believers. Two other things, mentioned before, concerning this worship, namely, its relation unto Christ as our high priest, and our access in it unto the holy place, the throne of grace, must be spoken unto at large elsewhere.

This is a brief declaration of that τελείωσις, or "perfection," which the apostle denies to have been attainable by the Levitical priesthood. And the grounds of his denial he gives us in the remaining words of the text, which we shall also consider: only we may observe by the way, that,—

Obs. III. To look for glory in evangelical worship from outward ceremonies and carnal ordinances, is to prefer the Levitical priesthood before that of Christ. —That which we are to look for in our worship is a τελείωσις,—such a "perfection" as we are capable of in this world. This the apostle denies unto the Levitical priesthood, and ascribes it unto the priesthood of Christ. But if such a perfection be to be found in ceremonies and ordinances outwardly pompous and glorious, upon necessity the contrary conclusion must be made and affirmed. But yet so it is come to pass in the world, that men do order things in their public worship as if they judged that the pure, unmixed worship of the gospel had no glory in comparison of that of the law, which did excel, and whereunto they do more or less conform themselves. But it is time for us to proceed with our apostle.

Having denied perfection unto the Levitical priesthood, which he lays down in a supposition including a negation, so as to make way for the proof of what he denied; for the further explication of it, and application unto his present purpose, he adds the respect that their priesthood had to the law, intending thereby to bring the law itself under the same censure of disability and insufficiency: Ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆ νενομοθέτητο.

Ὁ λαός. 1. The subject spoken of is ὁ λαός, "the people;" that is, in the wilderness, the body of the church, to whom the law and priesthood were given immediately by the ministry of Moses. But after this, the whole posterity of Abraham in their successive generations were one people with them, and are so esteemed. For a people is still the same: and, as a people never dies till all individuals that belong unto it are cut off, so by this "people" the whole church of all ages under the old testament is intended.

Νενομοθέτητο. 2. Of this people he says, νενομοθέτητο, "they were legalized." They were also "evangelized," as our apostle speaks, Heb. 4:2. They were so in the promise made unto Abraham, and in the many types of Christ and his offices and sacrifice that were instituted among them. Yet were they at the same time so brought under the power of the law, as that they had not the light, liberty, and comfort of the gospel, which we enjoy. Νομοθετεῖν, is "legem ferre," "legem sancire," "legem imponere;" to "make" "constitute," "impose" a law. And the passive, νομοθετεῖσθαι, when applied unto persons, is "legi latæ subjici," or "legem latam accipere;" to be made "subject unto a law;" to receive the law made to oblige them. So is it used in this place. We have therefore not amiss rendered it "received the law,"—"The people received the law." But the sense of that expression is regulated by the nature of a law. They so received it as to be made subject unto it, as to be obliged by it. Other things may be otherwise received; but a law is received by coming under its obligation. They were brought under the power, authority, and obligation of the law. Or, because the law was the foundation and instrument of their whole state, both in things sacred and civil, the meaning of the word may be, they were brought into that state and condition whereinto the law disposed them.

Ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ. This is said to be done ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ, "under it;" that is, ἱερωσύνῃ, "under that priesthood." But how the people may be said to receive the law under the Levitical priesthood, must be further inquired into. Some think that ἐπί in this place answers unto עַל in the Hebrew; that is, "concerning it." And so the meaning of the word is, 'For it was concerning the Levitical priesthood that the people received a command;' that is, God by his law and command instituted the Levitical priesthood among them, and no other, during the times of the old testament. According unto this interpretation, it is not the whole "law of commandments contained in ordinances" that is intended, but the law constituting the Levitical priesthood. This sense is embraced by Schlichtingius and Grotius; as it was before them touched on, but rejected, by Junius and Piscator. But although there be no inconveniency in this interpretation, yet I

look not on it as suited unto the design of the apostle in this place. For his intention is, to prove that perfection was not to be attained by the Levitical priesthood. Unto this end he was to consider that priesthood under all its advantages; for if any of them seem to be omitted, it would weaken his argument, seeing what it could not do under one consideration it might do under another. Now, although it was some commendation of the Levitical priesthood that it was appointed of God, or confirmed by a law, yet was it a far greater advancement that therewith the whole law was given, and thereon did depend, as our apostle declares in the next verses.

Γάρ. The introduction of this clause by the particle γάρ may be on a double account, which though different, yet either of them is consistent with this interpretation of the words. 1. It may be used in a way of concession of all the advantages that the Levitical priesthood was accompanied withal: 'Be it that together with that priesthood the people also received the law.' Or, 2. On the other side, there is included a reason why perfection was not to be attained by that priesthood; namely, because together with it, the people were brought into bondage under the yoke of the law. Either way, the whole law is intended. But the most probable reason of the introduction of this clause by that particle, "for," was to bring the whole law into the same argument,—that perfection was not attainable by it. This the apostle plainly reassumes, verses 18, 19, concluding, as of the priesthood here, that "it made nothing perfect." For it is the same law, which made nothing perfect, that was given together with that priesthood, and not that especial command alone whereby it was instituted.

There yet remains one difficulty in the words: for "the people" are said to "receive the law under the Levitical priesthood;" and therefore it should seem that that priesthood was established before the giving of the law. But it is certain that the law was given on Mount Sinai before the institution of that priesthood; for Aaron was not called nor separated unto his office until after Moses came down from the mount the second time, with the tables renewed, after he had broken them, Exod. 40:12–14. Two things may be applied to the removal of this difficulty. For, 1. The people may be said to receive the law under the Levitical priesthood, not with respect unto the order of the giving of the law, but as unto their actual obedience unto it, in the exercise of the things required in it. And so nothing that appertained unto divine worship, according unto the law, was performed by them until that priesthood was established. And this, as I have showed, is the true signification of the word νενομοθέτητο, here used. It doth not signify the giving of the law unto them, but their being

legalized, or brought under the power of it. Wherefore, although some part of the law was given before the institution of that priesthood, yet the people were not brought into the actual obedience of it but by virtue thereof. But, 2. The apostle in this place hath especial respect unto the law as it was the cause and rule of religious worship, of sacrifices, ceremonies, and other ordinances of divine service; for in that part of the law the Hebrews placed all their hopes of "perfection," which the moral law could not give them. And in this respect the priesthood was given before the law. For although the moral law was given in the audience of the people before, on the mount; and an explication was given of it unto Moses, as it was to be applied unto the government of that people in judiciary proceedings, commonly called the "judicial law," before he came down from the mount, Exod. 21, 22, 23; yet as to the system of all religious ceremonies, ordinances of worship, sacrifices of all sorts, and typical institutions, whatever belonged unto the sacred services of the church, the law of it was not given out unto them until after the erection of the tabernacle, and the separation of Aaron and his sons unto the office of the priesthood: yea, that whole law was given by the voice of God out of that tabernacle whereof Aaron was the minister, Lev. 1:1, 2. So that the people in the largest sense may be said to receive the law under that priesthood. Wherefore the sense of the words is, that together with the priesthood the people received "the law of commandments contained in ordinances;" which yet effected not in their conjunction the end that God designed in his worship. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. IV. Put all advantages and privileges whatever together, and yet they will bring nothing to perfection, without Jesus Christ.—God manifested this in all his revelations and institutions. His revelations from the foundation of the world were gradual and partial, increasing the light of the knowledge of his glory from age to age: but put them all together from the first promise, with all expositions of it and additions unto it, with prophecies of what should afterwards come to pass, taking in also the ministry of John the Baptist; yet did they not all of them together make a perfect revelation of God his mind and will, as he will be known and worshipped, Heb. 1:1, 2; John 1:18. So also was there great variety in his institutions. Some were of great efficacy and of clearer significancy than others; but all of them put together made nothing perfect. Much more will all the ways that others shall find out to attain righteousness, peace, light, and life before God, come short of giving rest or perfection.

The last thing considerable in these words, is the reason whereby the apostle proves, that in the judgment of the Holy Ghost himself, perfection was not attainable by the Levitical priesthood: "For if it were, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

The reason in these words is plain and obvious. For after the institution of that priesthood, and after the execution of it in its greatest glory, splendour, and efficacy, a promise is made in the time of David of another priest of another order to arise. Hereof there can be no account given but this alone, that perfection was not attainable by that which was already instituted and executed. For it was a perfection that God aimed to bring his church unto, or the most perfect state, in righteousness, peace, liberty, and worship, which it is capable of in this world; and whatever state the church be brought into, it must be by its high priest, and the discharge of his office. Now, if this might have been effected by the Levitical priesthood, the rising of another priest was altogether needless and useless. This is that invincible argument whereby the holy apostle utterly overthrows the whole system of the Judaical religion, and takes it out of the way, as we shall see more particularly afterwards. But the expressions used in this reason must be distinctly considered.

Ἱερεὺς ἕτερος. Ἱερεὺς ἕτερος,—"That another priest;" "a priest of another sort." Not only a priest who individually was not yet exhibited, but one of another stock and order;—a priest that should not be of the tribe of Levi, nor of the order of Aaron, as is afterwards explained.

Ἀνίστασθαι. Ἀνίστασθαι, "to arise;" that is, to be called, exalted, to stand up in the execution of that office. "To rise up," or "to be raised up," is used indefinitely concerning any one that attempts any new work, or is made eminent for any end, good or bad. In the latter sense God is said to raise up Pharaoh, to show his power in him,—that he might magnify his glorious power in his punishment and destruction, Exod. 9:16; Rom. 9:17. In a good sense, with respect unto the call of God, it is used by Deborah, Judges 5:7, "Until I Deborah arose, until I arose a mother in Israel." Commonly ἐγείρω and ἐγείρομαι are used to this purpose, Matt. 11:11, 24:24; John 7:52. "To arise," therefore, is to appear and stand up at the call of God, and by his designation, unto the execution or performance of any office or work. So was this other priest to appear, arise, stand up, and execute the priest's office, in compliance with the call and appointment of God.

And this priest was thus to "rise after the order of Melchisedec." So it is expressly affirmed in the Psalms. And here the apostle takes in the consideration of what he had before discoursed concerning the greatness of Melchisedec. For he designed not only to prove the thing itself,—which is sufficiently done in the testimony out of the psalmist,—but also to evidence the advantage and benefit of the church by this change. And hereunto the consideration of the greatness of Melchisedec was singularly subservient, as manifesting the excellency of that priesthood by whom the righteousness of the church and its worship was to be consummated.

Lastly, The apostle adds negatively of this other priest, who was to rise by reason of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood, which could not perfect the state of the church, that he was "not to be called after the order of Aaron."

Καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν λέγεσθαι. Καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν λέγεσθαι, —"And not to be called after the order of Aaron;" that is, in the psalm where the rising of this priest is declared and foretold. There he is said to be, or is denominated, "a priest after the order of Melchisedec," and nothing is spoken of the order of Aaron. Λέγεσθαι denotes only an external denomination, not an internal call. It is not the same with καλούμενος, used by our apostle, Heb. 5:4, Καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ,—"called of God;" that is, by an effectual call and separation unto office. But it answers προσαγορευθείς, chap. 5:10, —"cognominatus;" called so by external denomination. For the real call of Christ unto his office, by Him who said unto him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," was such as the call of Melchisedec himself could not represent. Wherefore the call of Christ unto his office and that of Melchisedec are nowhere compared. But upon the account of sundry resemblances, insisted on by the apostle in the first verses of this chapter, Christ is called by external denomination a priest after his order, and is nowhere called so after the order of Aaron. And the reason why the apostle addeth this negative is evident. For it might be said, that although another priest was foretold to arise, yet this might respect only an extraordinary call unto the same office, and not a call unto an office of another kind or order. Aaron was called by God immediately, and in an extraordinary manner; and all his posterity came into the same office by an ordinary succession. So God promised to raise up a priest in a singular manner, 1 Sam. 2:35, "I will raise me up a faithful priest, which shall do according unto that which is in mine heart and in my mind." A priest of another order is not here intended, but only the change of the line of succession from the house of Ithamar unto that of Phinehas, fulfilled in Zadok in the days of Solomon. So a

new priest might be raised up, and yet the old legal order and administration be continued. 'But,' saith the apostle, 'he is not to be of the same order.' For the defect of the Levitical priesthood was not only in the persons, which he mentions afterwards, but it was in the office itself, which could not bring the church to perfection. And that "de facto" he was not so to be, he proves by this argument negatively from the Scripture, that he is nowhere by the Holy Ghost said to be of the order of Aaron, but, on the contrary, of that of Melchisedec, which is in consistent therewithal.

And this is the first argument whereby the apostle confirms his principal design, which he particularly strengthens and improves in the verses following.

Hebrews 7: 12

Μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ἱερωσύνης, ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται.

"Mutato sacerdotio." Vulg. Lat., "translato." Beza, "hoc sacerdotio;" expressing the article. Syr., "Yea, even as a change was made in the priesthood, so a change was made also in the law;" not to the mind of the apostle. Ethiop., "If their law is passed away, their priesthood shall pass away;" more out of the way than the other.

Ver. 12.—For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law.

In this verse the apostle evidently declares what he intended by "the law" in that foregoing, which "the people received under the Levitical priesthood." It was the whole "law of commandments contained in ordinances," or the whole law of Moses, so far as it was the rule of worship and obedience unto the church; for that law it is that followeth the fates of the priesthood.

And herein lieth the stress and moment of the controversy which the apostle then had with the Jews, and which we have at this day with their unbelieving posterity. For the question was, whether the law of Moses was to be eternal absolutely,—the rule of the worship of the church whilst it was to continue in this world. And it appears that in the preaching of the gospel, that which most provoked the Jews was, that there was inferred thereby a cessation and taking away of Mosaical institutions. This was that which enraged them, unto the shedding of the blood of the church, which they were guilty of, after the murder of the Head thereof. For they fell on Stephen under pretence that he had said that "Jesus of Nazareth should change the customs which Moses delivered," Acts 6:14. And this also provoked their rage against our apostle, Acts

21:28. Yea, the most of them who were converted to the faith of the gospel yet continued obstinate in this persuasion, that the law of Moses was yet to continue in force, Acts 21:20. And with this opinion some of them troubled the peace and hindered the edification of the churches called from among the Gentiles, as hath been at large elsewhere declared. This matter, therefore, which the apostle now entereth upon, was to be managed with care and diligence.

This he enters upon in this verse, being a transition from one point unto another, having made way for his intentions in the verse foregoing. That which hitherto he hath insisted on in this chapter, is the excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of the law, manifested in the representation made of it by Melchisedec. In the pursuit of his argument unto that purpose, he proves that the Aaronical priesthood was to be abolished, because, after its institution, there was a promise of the introduction of another, wherewith it was inconsistent. And herein observing the strict conjunction that was between that priesthood and the law, with their mutual dependence on one another, he proves from thence that the law itself was also to be abolished.

Herein, therefore, lay the principal design of the apostle in this whole epistle. For the law may be looked on under a double consideration: 1. As unto what the Jews, in that degenerate state of the church, obstinately looked for from it. 2. As unto what it did really require of them, whilst it stood in force and power. And under both these considerations it was utterly inconsistent with the gospel.

1. The Jews at that time expected no less from it than expiation of sin by its sacrifices, and justification by the works of it. It is true, they looked for these things by it unjustly, seeing it promised no such thing, nor was ever ordained unto any such purpose; but yet these things they looked for, and were resolved so to do, until the law should be removed out of the way. And it is evident how inconsistent this is with the whole work of the mediation of Christ, which is the sum and substance of the gospel. But suppose they looked not absolutely for atonement and justification by the sacrifices and works of the law, yet the continuance of their observance was repugnant unto the gospel. For the Lord Christ, by the one offering of himself, had made perfect atonement for sin; so that the sacrifices of the law could be of no more use or signification. And the continuance of them, wherein there was renewed mention of the expiation of sin, did declare that there was not a perfect expiation already made: which overthrows the efficacy and virtue of the sacrifice of Christ; even as the daily repetition of a sacrifice in the mass continueth to do. Again; whereas the Lord Christ, by his obedience and righteousness, had fulfilled the law, and was

become the end of it for righteousness unto them that do believe, the seeking after justification as it were by the works of the law was wholly repugnant thereunto.

2. And in the next place, the law may be considered as it prescribed a way of worship, in its ordinances and institutions, which God did accept. This the people were indispensably obliged unto whilst the law stood in force. But in the gospel our Lord Jesus Christ had now appointed a new, spiritual worship, suited unto the principles and grace thereof. And these were so inconsistent as that no man could at once serve these two masters.

Wherefore the whole law of Moses, as given unto the Jews, whether as used or abused by them, was repugnant unto and inconsistent with the gospel, and the mediation of Christ, especially his priestly office, therein declared; neither did God either design, appoint, or direct that they should be co-existent. If, then, the law continue in its force, and have power to oblige the consciences of men, and is still so to abide, there is neither room nor place for Christ and his priesthood in the church, nor, indeed, for the discharge of his other offices. And this opposition between the law and the gospel, works and grace, our own righteousness and that of Christ, our apostle doth not only grant, but vehemently urge, in all his epistles, allowing none to suppose that they may have both these strings unto their bow. One of them he is peremptory that all mankind must betake themselves unto. Here the Jews were entangled, and knew not what to do. The greatest part of them adhered unto the law, with an utter rejection of the gospel and the Author of it, perishing in their unbelief. Others of them endeavoured to make a composition of these things, and retaining of Moses, they would admit of Christ and the gospel also. And this the Holy Ghost in the apostles did for a while bear withal. But now, whereas the whole service of the tabernacle was of itself fallen down, and become, as useless, so of no force, its obliging power ceasing in its accomplishment by Christ; and whereas the time was drawing near wherein God by his providence would utterly remove it; the inconsistency of it with the gospel-state of the church was now fully to be declared.

This, therefore, our apostle grants, that there was such a repugnancy between the law and the gospel, as unto the ends of righteousness and divine worship, as that one of them must of necessity be parted withal. Wherefore the whole controversy turning on this hinge, it was highly incumbent on him to manifest and prove that the law did now cease, according unto the appointment of God; and that God had of old designed, foretold, and promised, that so it should do,

and be abolished upon the introduction of that which was the end and substance of it. And this I look upon as the greatest trial the faith of men ever had in the concerns of religion; namely, to believe that God should take away, abolish, and leave as dead and useless, that whole system of solemn worship which he had appointed in so glorious a manner, and accepted for so many generations. But yet, as we are to acquiesce in the sovereign pleasure of God, made known by revelation, against all reasonings of our own whatsoever; so it must be confessed that faith was greatly bespoken and prepared, by the nature, end, and use of all those institutions, which more than intimated that they were appointed only for a time, and served to introduce a more glorious dispensation of divine wisdom and grace.

The proof, therefore, of the utter cessation of the law, the apostle enters upon by the invincible argument whose foundation or proposition is laid in this verse, and the especial parts of it are explained, confirmed, and vindicated, in those that follow. And in his ensuing discourse his principal design is to prove, that the church is so far from being a loser or disadvantaged by this change, as that she receiveth thereby the highest privilege and greatest blessing that in this world she is capable of.

In the words of this verse there is a supposition of the change of the priesthood, as that which was proved before; and an inference from thence unto a necessity of the change of the law.

Μετατιθεμένης τῆς ἱερωσύνης. "The priesthood being changed;" that is, the priesthood of Levi, appointed and exercised under the law. Μετατιθεμένης, "translato," "mutato;" so some read, "transferred," "translated;" some, "changed." The former do not reach the whole sense intended; for the office of the priesthood may be transferred from one person to another, one family unto another, yea, one tribe unto another, and yet the priesthood, as to the kind and nature of it, continue the same. This our apostle afterwards mentions, verses 13, 14, as a part of his argument to prove the priesthood itself to be changed. But this it doth not absolutely, seeing it is possible that the office may be transferred from one tribe unto another and yet not be changed as unto its nature. But the proof lies in this, that Moses, in the institution of the priesthood, made no mention of the tribe of Judah; and therefore if that office be transferred unto that tribe, it must be of another kind than that before instituted. And on this supposition, that which he intends to prove follows evidently upon the translation of the priesthood. For all the sacred services and worship which the law required were so confined, or at least had that respect unto the Levitical

priesthood, as that no part of it, no sacred duty, could be performed, on a supposition of taking away the priesthood from that tribe and family. For whereas the whole of their worship consisted in the service and sacrifices of the tabernacle, God had appointed that whosoever did draw nigh unto the performance of any of these services that was not of the seed of Aaron, should be cut off and destroyed. Wherefore, upon a supposition of the ceasing or changing of the priesthood in that family, the whole law of ordinances became impracticable, useless, and lost its power; especially seeing there was no provision made in the law itself for a priesthood in any other tribe. Besides, such was the contexture of the law, and such the sanction of it, ("Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,") that if any thing be taken out of it, if its order be disturbed, if any alteration be made, or any transgression be dispensed withal, or exempted from the curse, the whole fabric must of necessity fall unto the ground.

But yet it is not a mere transferring of the priesthood from one tribe unto another that is here intended by the apostle; for there is such a change of the priesthood as there is of the law. But the change of the law was an ἀθέτησις, a "disannulling" or abolishing, as it is affirmed, verse 18: such, therefore, must the change of the priesthood be; and so it was. The priesthood was changed, in that one kind of it was utterly abolished, and another introduced. So was the Levitical priesthood changed, as that the other priest, which came with his office in the room thereof, could not be called or said to be after the order of Aaron, but was of another kind, typed out by Melchisedec. It may therefore be inquired on what grounds this priesthood was to be so abolished, or how it appears that so it is, and by what means it was actually taken away.

That it was so to be abolished the apostle proves, 1. Because, before the institution of that priesthood, there was another far more excellent, namely, that of Melchisedec. 2. That the Holy Ghost had declared that the introduction of that more excellent priesthood for a season was to prefigure and represent another priesthood, that was afterwards to be established. And this could not be that of Levi, seeing God doth not make use of that which is more excellent to prefigure or represent that which is inferior thereunto. Another priesthood, therefore, must arise and be granted unto the church, in answer unto that type. 3. That it was impossible that this new priesthood, after the order of Melchisedec, should be consistent with that of Levi, or that it should be continued after that was brought in. For, (1.) He was to be of another tribe, as he immediately proves. (2.) Because his priesthood and sacrifice were to be of

another kind than that of Levi; which he demonstrates at large in the three ensuing chapters. (3.) Because, on the other hand, the priesthood of Aaron, [1.] Could never accomplish and effect the true and proper ends of the priesthood, which the church stood in need of, and without which it could not be consummated: and, [2.] Was in its own nature, offices, works, and duties, inconsistent with any priesthood that was not of its own order. It must therefore be abolished.

It may therefore be inquired, how the priesthood was changed, or that of the house of Levi taken away. And I say, as the apostle directs, first, It was done by the appointment of God. For his introduction of another priest, when it was actually accomplished, had the force of a repealing law. The institution of the former was abrogated thereby, without any other constitution. For as unto its use, it did hence cease of itself. It had no more to do, its work was at an end, and its services of no advantage to the church. For the sign of what is to come is set aside when the thing signified is brought in, and ceaseth to be a sign; yea, the continuance of it would give a testimony against itself. And as to its right, this new institution of God, by his own authority applied unto it in its proper season, took it away. Secondly, The application of the authority of God in the institution of a new priesthood to take away the old was made by the Holy Ghost, in the revelation of the will of God by the gospel, wherein the ceasing of it was declared. And sundry things may be observed concerning this abolishing of it:—

Obs. I. Notwithstanding the great and many provocations of them by whom it was exercised and discharged, yet God took it not away until it had accomplished the end whereunto it was designed.—Neither the wickedness of the people, nor of the priests themselves, could provoke the Lord to revoke his institution, until, 1. The appointed end of it was come. And it is no small part of the blindness of the present Jews, to think that God would so utterly abolish his own ordinance, as they must acknowledge he hath done, if he would have it to be of any longer use in the church. For sixteen hundred years they have not had any priest among them. Nor is it possible they should, according unto the law, if they were actually restored unto their own pretended right in Canaan: for they have utterly lost the distinction of tribes among them, nor can any of them in the least pretend that they are of the lineage of the priests; and for any one to usurp that office who is not lineally descended from Aaron, they own to be an abomination. As, therefore, they know not how to look for a Messiah from the tribe of Judah, seeing all sacred genealogy is at an end; no more can they look

for a priest of the house of Aaron. Now, this end of it was the "bringing in of a better hope," or the promised Seed; who, according to the promise, was to come to the second temple, and therefore whilst that priesthood continued. 2. God took it not away till he brought in that which was more excellent, glorious, and advantageous unto the church, namely, the priesthood of Christ. And if this be not received, through their unbelief, they alone are the cause of their being losers by this alteration. 3. In abundant patience and condescension, with respect unto that interest which it had in the consciences of men from his institution, God did not utterly lay it aside in a day, after which it should be absolutely unlawful to comply with it; but he took it away by degrees, as shall afterwards be declared.

Obs. II. That the efficacy of all ordinances or institutions of worship depends on the will of God alone.—Whilst it was his will that the priesthood should abide in the family of Levi, it was useful and effectual unto all the ends whereunto it was designed; but when he would make an alteration therein, it was in vain for any to look for either benefit or advantage by it. And although we are not now to expect any change in the institutions of divine worship, yet all our expectations from them are to be resolved into the will of God.

Obs. III. Divine institutions cease not without an express divine abrogation. —Where they are once granted and erected by the authority of God, they can never cease without an express act of the same authority taking them away. So was it with the institutions of the Aaronical priesthood, as the apostle declares. And this one consideration is enough to confirm the grant of the initial seal of the covenant unto the seed of present believers, which was once given by God himself in the way of an institution, and never by him revoked.

Obs. IV. God will never abrogate or take away any institution or ordinance of worship unto the loss or disadvantage of the church.—He would not remove or abolish the priesthood of Levi until that which was incomparably more excellent was introduced and established.

Obs. V. God in his wisdom so ordered all things, that the taking away of the priesthood of the law gave it its greatest glory.—For it ceased not before it had fully and absolutely accomplished the end whereunto it was designed: which is the glory and perfection of any ordinance; even the mediation of Christ himself shall cease when all the ends of it are fulfilled. And this end of the priesthood was most glorious; namely, the bringing in of that of Christ, and therein of the eternal salvation of the church. And what more honourable issue could it come

unto? The Jews, by their pretended adherence unto it, are they which cast the highest dishonour upon it; for they own that it is laid aside, at least that it hath been so for sixteen hundred years, and yet neither the end of it effected nor any thing brought in by it unto the greater advantage of the church.

Ἐξ ἀνάγκης. The next thing considerable in these words, is the inference which the apostle makes from his assertion and the proof of it: "There is made of necessity a change also of the law;" ἐξ ἀνάγκης, "of necessity." It is not a note of the necessity of the inference from the proposition, in the way of argument, but the necessary dependence of the things mentioned, the one on the other. For whereas the whole administration of the law, so far as it concerned the expiation of sin by sacrifices, and the solemn worship of God in the tabernacle or temple, depended absolutely on, and was confined unto the Aaronical priesthood, so as that without it no one sacrifice could be offered unto God, nor any ordinance of divine worship be observed; that priesthood being abolished and taken out of the way, the law itself of necessity and unavoidably ceaseth and becometh useless. It doth so, I say, as unto all the proper ends of it, as a law obligatory unto the duties required in it.

Νόμου μετάθεσις. Wherefore there is also νόμου μετάθεσις, "a change of the law;" that is, an abolition of it: for it is a change of the same nature with the change of the priesthood; which, as we have showed, was its abolition and taking away. Γίνεται. And how this came to pass the word γίνεται declares; there is "made" a change. It did, indeed, necessarily follow on the change of the priesthood; yet not so, but that there was an act of the will and authority of God on the law itself. God made this change, and he alone could do it; that he would do so, and did so, the apostle proves in this and the verses following. So is the "law of commandments contained in ordinances taken out of the way," being "nailed unto the cross of Christ," where he left it completely accomplished.

But moreover, the law in its institutions was an instructive revelation, and taught many things concerning the nature of sin, its expiation and cleansing; representing, though darkly, good things to come. So it is yet continued as a part of the revealed will of God. And the light of the gospel being brought unto it, we may learn things far more clearly out of it than ever the Jews of old could do.

And the force of the argument here insisted on by the apostle against the absolute perpetuity of the law,—which was of old, and yet continueth to be, the head of the controversy between the Jews and the church of Christ,—is so

unavoidable, that some of them have been compelled to acknowledge that in the days of the Messiah legal sacrifices and the rest of their ceremonies shall cease; though the most of them understand that their cause is given away thereby. And they have no other way to free themselves from this argument of the apostle, but by denying that Melchisedec was a priest, or that it is the Messiah who is prophesied of, Ps. 110; which evidences of a desperate cause, and more desperate defenders of it, have been elsewhere convinced of folly. Wherefore this important argument is confirmed by our apostle in the ensuing verses. And we may see,—

Obs. VI. How it is a fruit of the manifold wisdom of God, that it was a great mercy to give the law, and a greater to take it away. And,—

Obs. VII. If under the law the whole worship of God did so depend on the priesthood, that that failing, or being taken away, the whole worship of itself was to cease, as being no more acceptable before God; how much more is all worship under the new testament rejected by him, if there be not a due regard therein unto the Lord Christ, as the only high priest of the church, and to the efficacy of his discharge of that office!

Obs. VIII. It is the highest vanity, to pretend use or continuance in the church, from possession or prescription, or pretended benefit, beauty, order, or advantage, when once the mind of God is declared against it.—The pleas of this kind for the old priesthood and law excelled all that can be insisted on, with respect unto any other things that any pretend a veneration for in divine worship; yet were they of no validity or efficacy.

Hebrews 7: 13

Ἐφ᾽ ὃν γὰρ λέγεται ταῦτα, φυλῆς ἑτέρας μετέσχηκεν, ἀφ᾽ ἧς οὐδεὶς προσέσχηκε τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ.

Ἐφ᾽ ὃν, "in quem." "In quo," Vulg. Lat. הוּ גֵּיר דְּאִתַּאמַר עֲלַוְהִי הָלֵּין, Syr.; "for he concerning whom these things are spoken." "For he on whom these things are said," Rhem., improperly. Φυλῆς ἑτέρας μετέσχηκεν. Vulg., "de alia tribu est;" Rhem., "is of another tribe:" omitting the especial force of the word μετέσχηκεν, though the substance of the sense be retained. Syr., אֶתְיְלֵד, "was born of another tribe." "Particeps fuit," did derive his genealogy from, and so had his especial relation unto, another tribe. Προσέσχηκε, "ministravit," "attendit." Vulg.,

"præsto fuit." The Ethiopic, "And if any one will say so," (or "as one may say,") "he placeth another tribe, because they kept not the altar;" mistaking both the meaning of the design and sense of the apostle's words.

Ver. 13.—For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth unto another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

Γάρ. The causal conjunction, γάρ, doth not only intimate a pursuit of the foregoing argument, and the confirmation of the supposition whereon it was built, but also an entrance upon the express application of the whole precedent discourse unto the person of Jesus Christ, the true and only high priest of the church.

Ἐφ᾽ ὃν. In the words there is, 1. The subject to be further treated on described, Ἐφ᾽ ὃν λέγεται ταῦτα: that is, περὶ οὗ, "de quo,"—"he concerning whom;" "quem designaverunt hæc," "ad quem hæc pertinent,"—"he who is designed in all these things," "he unto whom they do all belong," "he with respect unto whom Ταῦτα. ταῦτα,"—"these things;" that is, all that hath been spoken concerning Melchisedec and his priesthood, all things that do naturally follow and ensue thereon. For although sundry of them were spoken firstly and immediately concerning other persons and things, yet they all belong ultimately and perfectly unto Christ alone, whom they did represent and make way for. And we may observe hence,—

Obs. I. That it is our duty, in studying of the Scripture, to inquire diligently after the things which are spoken concerning Jesus Christ, and what is taught of him in them.—This doth our apostle find out in all that was spoken concerning Melchisedec and the Levitical priesthood. This he himself gives in charge, John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures: ... they are they which testify of me." Our principal aim in searching the Scriptures ought to be, that we may find out what they say and what they testify concerning Christ. And this was the practice of the prophets of old, with respect unto all the revelations which they received, 1 Pet 1:10–12. Let the pains, and industry, and skill of men, in the reading and interpreting of the Scriptures, be what they will, without this design they will never rightly be understood, nor duly improved. For as those things which concern his person, office, and grace, with the mysteries of the wisdom of God in them all, are the principal subject of them; so all other things which are taught and revealed in them are never apprehended, unto any good end or purpose, unless their relation unto him and dependence upon him be rightly understood. Some are charged that they esteem no preaching but that which is

concerning the person of Christ; which how false an accusation it is, their preaching and writings do discover. But this they say, indeed, (that is, some do so,) that seeing it is the design of God to "gather all things into a head in Christ," that preaching is to little purpose which doth not more or less expressly evidence the relation of all truths and duties unto him.

Φυλῆς ἑτέρας μετέσχηκε. 2. It is added, φυλῆς ἑτέρας μετέσχηκε,—"he pertaineth unto another tribe." To confirm his argument concerning the changing or abolition of the priesthood, the apostle supposeth the distribution of the people into tribes, according unto the number of the sons of Jacob. And as these tribes had a common interest in the church, so some of them had peculiar privileges granted and confirmed unto them by law. So the priesthood was granted, confined, and confirmed unto the tribe of Levi, and unto the family of Aaron in that tribe. And it was so confined thereunto, as that all the rest of the tribes were for ever excluded from any interest therein, and all that belonged unto them incapacitated therefor. But unto one of the tribes so excluded from an interest in the legal priesthood did He belong of whom these things are spoken. And this I look upon as the principal reason of the distinction of that people into their tribes; namely, that God thereby might provide for their instruction as to the continuance of the legal worship among them; which could be no longer continued than the priesthood was reserved unto that one tribe whereunto it was originally granted, Μετέσχηκε. See the meaning of the word in our exposition on chap. 2:14. His share, lot, and interest, lay in another tribe.

Ἀφ᾽ ἧς. 3. He describes in general this other tribe whereof he was, by its legal exclusion from all the service of the altar: "Of which no man gave attendance at the altar." What tribe that was in particular he declares in the next verse, showing not only of what tribe he was, but also what it was necessary he should be. "Another tribe, ἀφ᾽ ἧς,"—"whereof;"—'from which none that was genealogized attended at the altar;' that is, had right so to do, or was not forbidden by the law so to do. God doth not reckon that to be done in his service which he hath not appointed, much less which he hath forbidden. What other inroads were made on the sacerdotal office we know not; but one of the tribe here intended by the apostle, whereof none was to attend at the altar, did draw nigh to offer incense; for which he was rebuked by the high priest, and punished of God, 2 Chron. 26:16–21. And God exercised the greater severity

herein, that the church might understand, that when he introduced and allowed of a priest of another tribe, that old priesthood must of necessity cease and be abolished. "No man gave attendance;" that is, had right so to do.

Προσέσχηκε τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ. That expression, προσέσχηκε τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ, "attended," "waited on the altar," may be a synecdochical description of the whole priestly office from the principal work and duty belonging thereunto. But I suppose the apostle may not only include the priests, unto whom the immediate work of sacrificing at the altar did belong, but all those who attended the services of it, though they could neither burn incense nor offer sacrifice; that is, all the Levites in their courses. For he so excludes the tribe whereof he speaks from the least relation unto the sacerdotal work or office. None of them ever did or might draw near nor minister at the altar, in any sacred services whatsoever. See 1 Cor. 9:13.

This entrance doth the apostle make into the confirmation of his assertion, that the priesthood was changed, and therewithal the law. For it appears that there was to be a priest who had no right by the law so to be, seeing he was of that tribe which the law utterly excluded from any interest in the sacred services of the altar, and much more those which were peculiar unto the Aaronical priests. Thus,—

Obs. II. All men's rights, duties, and privileges, in sacred things, are fixed and limited by divine institution. And,—

Obs. III. Seeing Christ himself had no right to minister at the material altar, the re-introduction of such altars is inconsistent with the perpetual continuance of his priesthood.

Hebrews 7: 14

The apostle confirms his assertion by a particular application of it unto the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ver. 14.—Πρόδηλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξ Ἰούδα ἀνατέταλκεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν, εἰς ἣν φυλὴν οὐδὲν περὶ ἱερωσύνης Μωϋσῆς ἐλάλησε.

Περὶ ἱερωσύνης. Vulg. Lat., "de sacerdotibus;" without countenance from any copies of the original or ancient translation.

Ver. 14.—For it is evident [or manifest] that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood.

The words contain a double assertion: 1. That "our Lord sprang of the tribe of Judah." 2. That "of that tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood." There wants nothing to complete the proof of his argument but that our Lord was a priest; which he therefore proves in the ensuing verses.

Πρόδηλόν [ἐστι.] In the first part of the words there are two things considerable: 1. The manner of the proposition, or the modification of the assertion, Πρόδηλόν [ἐστι.] The conjunction γάρ, "for," doth only show that a reason or proof of what was before laid down is here introduced. And of this he saith, "palam est," "manifestum,"—it is "manifest," "open," a thing confessed; "evident," as we say, in itself; a thing easy to be proved, but that it is by no man denied. Only, whereas δῆλον is "manifest" or "evident," πρόδηλον seems to intimate what was "manifest beforehand;" as προδηλόω is to "evidence a matter beforehand." And this may not only respect, but be confined unto the preceding promise and declaration that the Messiah should be of the tribe of Judah. But we may consider in general how this is said to be a thing "evident" or "manifest" in its application unto our Lord Jesus Christ. And,—

(1.) This was included in the faith of believers, who granted him to be the Messiah; for nothing was more plainly promised under the old testament, nor more firmly believed by the church, than that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David. And thus it was πρόδηλον, "manifest to them beforehand." For unto Judah the promise was solemnly confined, Gen. 49:8–10, and frequently reiterated unto David, as I have showed elsewhere. Whoever, therefore, acknowledged our Lord Jesus Christ to be the true Messiah, —as all the Hebrews did unto whom our apostle wrote, though the most of them adhered unto the law and ceremonies of it,—they must and did grant that he sprang of the tribe of Judah. And none of the unbelieving Jews made use of this objection, that he was not of the tribe of Judah; which if they could have managed, had absolutely justified them in their unbelief. This was sufficient unto the purpose of the apostle, seeing he proceeded not only on what was granted among them, but firmly believed by them, and not denied by their adversaries.

(2.) It was in those days manifest by his known genealogy; for, by the providence of God, his parents were publicly enrolled of that tribe, and of the family of David, in the tax and recognition of the people appointed by Augustus Cæsar, Luke 2:4, 5. And this was made yet more famous by the cruelty of Herod, seeking his destruction among the children of Bethlehem, Matt. 2. And the

genealogies of all families, whilst the Jewish commonwealth continued in any condition, were carefully preserved, because many legal rights and constitutions did depend thereon. And this preservation of genealogies was both appointed of God and fenced with legal rights, for this very end, to evidence the accomplishment of his promise in the Messiah. And unto this end was his genealogy written and recorded by two of the evangelists, as that whereon the truth of his being the Messiah did much depend.

Sundry of the ancients had an apprehension that the Lord Christ derived his genealogy from both the tribes of Judah and Levi, in the regal and sacerdotal offices, as he who was to be both king and priest. And there is a story inserted in Suidas, how, in the days of Justinian the emperor, one Theodosius, a principal patriarch of the Jews, acquainted his friend, one Philip, a Christian, how he was enrolled by the priests in their order, as of the lineage of the priests, by the name of "Jesus the son of Mary and of God;" and that the records thereof were kept by the Jews at Tiberias to that very time. But the whole story is filled with gross effects of ignorance and incredible fables, being only a dream of some superstitious monastic. But the ancients grounded their imagination on the kindred that was between his mother and Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest, who was "of the daughters of Aaron," Luke 1:5. But this whole conceit is not only false, but directly contradictory to the scope and argument of the apostle in this place. For the authors of it would have the Lord Christ so to derive his genealogy from the tribe of Levi, as thence to be entitled unto the priesthood; which yet it could not be, unless he were also proved to be of the family of Aaron: and to assign a priesthood unto him as derived from Aaron, is openly contradictory unto the apostle in this place, and destructive of his whole design, as also of the true, real priesthood of Christ himself; as is evident unto any one who reads this chapter. The alliance and kindred that was between the blessed Virgin and Elisabeth was doubtless by an antecedent intermarriage of those tribes, as Elisabeth's mother might be sister unto the father or grandfather of the holy Virgin. And this was not only lawful between the tribes of Judah and Levi, or the regal and sacerdotal families,—whence Jehoshabeath the wife of Jehoiada, was the daughter of Jehoram the king, 2 Chron. 22:11, as some have imagined,—but such marriages were usual unto and lawful among all the other tribes, where women had no inheritances of land; which was expressly provided against by a particular law. And this very law of exception doth sufficiently prove the liberty of all others; for the words of it are, "Every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel,

shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers," Num. 36:8. Both the express limitation of the law unto those who possessed inheritances, and the reason of it, for the preservation of the lots of each tribe entire, as verses 3, 4, manifest that all others were at liberty to marry any Israelite, be he of what tribe soever. And thus both the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, one by a legal, the other by a natural line, were both of them from the tribe of Judah, and family of David. So,—

Obs. I. It pleaseth God to give sufficient evidence unto the accomplishment of his promises.

Ἀνατέταλκε. 2. For the manner of the proceeding of the Lord Christ from that tribe, the apostle expresseth it by ἀνατέταλκε,—"he sprang." Ἀνατέλλω is usually taken in an active sense, "to cause to rise:" Matt. 5:45, Τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει,—"He causeth his sun to rise." And sometimes it is used neutrally, for "to rise;" and so, as some think, it peculiarly denotes the rising of the sun, in distinction from the other planets. Hence is ἀνατολή, "the east," from the rising of the sun. So the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is called the "rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings," Mal. 4:2. Ἀνατολὴ ἐξ ὑψους, Luke 1:78,—"The day-spring from on high." Thus did the Lord Christ arise in the light and glory of the sun, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." But the word is used also to express other springings, as of water from a fountain, or a branch from the stock. And so it is said of our Lord Jesus, that he should "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," Isa. 53:2; a "rod out of the stem, and a branch out of the roots of Jesse," chap. 11:1. Hence he is frequently called "The Branch," and "The Branch of the LORD," Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5, 33:15; Zech. 3:8, 6:12. But the first, which is the most proper sense of the word, is to be regarded; he arose eminently and illustriously from the tribe of Judah.

Secondly, Having laid down this matter of fact, as that which was evident, and on all hands confessed, he observes upon it, that "of that tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood."

Εἰς ἣν φυλήν. Εἰς ἣν φυλήν, "with reference unto which tribe;" περὶ ἧς, "de qua tribu." Being to prove that the priesthood did no way belong to the tribe of Judah, so that the introduction of a priest of that tribe must necessarily exclude those of the house of Aaron from that office, he appeals unto the lawgiver, or rather, the law itself. Μωϋσῆς. For by "Moses," not the person of Moses

absolutely is intended, as though these things depended on his authority; but it is his ministry in giving of the law, or his person only as ministerially employed in the declaration of it, that our apostle respects. And it is the law of worship that is under consideration. Moses did record the blessing of Judah, as given him by Jacob, wherein the promise was made unto him that the Shiloh should come from him, Gen. 49:10; and this same Shiloh was also to be a priest: but this was a promise before the law, and not to be accomplished until the expiration of the law, and belonged not unto any institution of the law given by Moses. Wherefore Moses, as the lawgiver, when the office of the priesthood was instituted in the church, and confirmed by especial law or ordinance, spake nothing of it with respect unto the tribe of Judah. For as in the law, the first institution of it was directly confined unto the tribe of Levi and house of Aaron, so there is not in all the law of Moses the least intimation that on any occasion, in any future generation, it should be translated unto that tribe. Nor was it possible, without the alteration and abolition of the whole law, that any one of that tribe should once be put into the office of the priesthood: the whole worship of God was to cease, rather than that any one of the tribe of Judah should officiate in the office of the priesthood. And this silence of Moses in this matter the apostle takes to be a sufficient argument to prove that the legal priesthood did not belong, nor could be transferred, unto the tribe of Judah. And the grounds hereof are resolved into this general maxim, that whatever is not revealed and appointed in the worship of God by God himself, is to be considered as nothing, yea, as that which is to be rejected. And such he conceived to be the evidence of this maxim, that he chose rather to argue from the silence of Moses in general than from the particular prohibition, that none who was not of the posterity of Aaron should approach unto the priestly office. So God himself condemneth some instances of false worship on this ground, that "he never appointed them," that "they never came into his heart," and hence aggravates the sin of the people, rather than from the particular prohibition of them, Jer. 7:31. Wherefore,—

Obs. II. Divine revelation gives bounds, positively and negatively, unto the worship of God.

Hebrews 7: 15–17

That the Aaronical priesthood was to be changed, and consequently the whole law of ordinances that depended thereon, and that the time wherein this change was to be made was now come, is that which is designed unto

confirmation in all this discourse. And it is that truth whereinto our faith of the acceptance of evangelical worship is resolved; for without the removal of the old, there is no place for the new. This, therefore, the apostle now fully confirms by a recapitulation of the force and sum of his preceding arguments.

Ver. 15–17.—Καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστιν, εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισεδὲκ ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος, ὃς οὐ κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκικῆς γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου. Μαρτυρεῖ γὰρ, Οτι σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ.

Ver. 15–17.—And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.

There are four things to be considered in these words: 1. The manner of the introduction of this new argument, declaring its especial force, with the weight that the apostle lays upon it: "And it is yet far more evident." 2. The medium or argument itself which he insists upon; which is, that from what he had already proved, "there was another priest to arise, after the similitude of Melchisedec." 3. The illustration of this argument, in an explication of the ways and means whereby this priest arose, declared both negatively and positively: "Who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." 4. The confirmation of the whole with the testimony of David: "For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

The manner of the introduction of this argument is emphatical: Καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστι, "And it is yet far more evident."

Καί. The conjunctive particle, καί, connects this consideration unto that foregoing, as of the same nature and tendency.

Κατάδηλον. The thing spoken of is said to be κατάδηλον. Of what he said before he affirmed that it was πρόδηλον, verse 14, namely, that "our Lord sprang of Judah,"—"evident," "manifest," "demonstrable;" but this, he adds, is κατάδηλον: which composition of the word intends [strengthens] the signification, arguing yet a more open and convincing evidence.

Περισσότερον. Hence he adds, that it is περισσότερον, "magis patet," "abundantius manifestum," comparatively with what was said before; of an abundant efficacy for conviction; that whose light nothing can stand against. But we must observe, that the apostle doth not compare the things themselves absolutely with one another, and so determine that one is of a more evident

truth than the other; but he compares them only with respect unto the evidence in arguing unto his end. There is more immediate force in this consideration, to prove the cessation of the Levitical priesthood, that "another priest was to arise after, the similitude of Melchisedec," than was merely in this, that "our Lord sprang of the tribe of Judah;"—but of this afterwards.

Ἔτι. And therefore he adds ἔτι, "yet;" that is, 'Above all that hath been collected from the consideration of Melchisedec, there is yet this uncontrollable evidence unto our purpose remaining.'

The apostle, we see, lays great weight on this argument, and withal proceeds gradually and distinctly from one thing to another in the whole discourse. It may be we see not why he should insist so much upon, and so narrowly scan, all particulars in this manner; for being freed by the gospel from the power of temptations about it, and being of the Gentiles, who were never concerned in it, we cannot be sensible of the just importance of what is under confirmation. The truth is, he hath the greatest argument in hand that was ever controverted in the church of God, and upon the determination whereof the salvation or ruin of the church did depend. The worship he treated of was immediately instituted by God himself; and had now continued nearly fifteen hundred years in the church. All this while it had been the certain rule of God's acceptance of the people, or his anger towards them: for whilst they complied with it, his blessing was continually upon them; and the neglect of it was still punished with severity. And the last caution that God had given them, by the ministry of the last prophet he sent unto them, was, that they should abide in the observance of the law of Moses, "lest he should come and smite the earth with a curse," Mal. 4:4, 6. Besides these and sundry other things, that were real and pleadable in the behalf of the Mosaical worship, the Hebrews esteemed it always their great and singular privilege above all other nations, which they would rather die than part withal. And the design of the apostle in this place, is to prove that now, utterly unexpectedly unto the church, after so long a season, their whole worship was to be removed, to be used no more, but that another system of ordinances and institutions, absolutely new, and inconsistent with it, was to be introduced. And upon the compliance of the Hebrews with this doctrine, or the rejection of it, depended their eternal salvation or destruction.

It was therefore very necessary that the apostle should proceed warily, distinctly, and gradually, omitting no argument that was of force and pleadable in this cause, nor failing to remark on them in an especial manner which contained an especial evidence and demonstrative force in them; as he doth in

this instance. For this introduction of it, "And it is yet far more," or "abundantly more evident," is as a hand put in the margin of a writing, calling for a peculiar attendance unto and consideration of the matter directed unto. And we may see,—

Obs. I. That present truths are earnestly to be pleaded and contended for.—So the apostle Peter would have believers established ἐν τῇ παρούσῃ ἀληθείᾳ, —"in the present truth." All truth is eternal, and in itself equally subsistent and present unto all ages; but it is especially so either from the great use of it in some seasons, or the great opposition that is made unto it. So this doctrine about the abolition of the Mosaical ceremonies and institutions, with the introduction of a new priesthood and new ordinances of worship, was then "the present truth," in the knowledge and confirmation whereof the church was eternally concerned. And so may other truths be at other seasons. And any of them may be so rendered by the opposition that at any time is made unto them. For God is pleased to exercise and try the faith of the church by heresies; which are fierce, pertinacious, and subtile oppositions made to the truth. Now none of them, which aim at any consistency in and with themselves, or are of any real danger unto the church, did ever reject all gospel truths, but some general principles they will allow, or they would leave themselves no foundation to stand upon in their opposition unto others. Those, therefore, singly opposed by them at any time,—as the deity or satisfaction of Christ, justification by faith, and the like, —being so opposed, become "the present truth" of the age; in the instance of adherence whereunto God will try the faith of his people, and requires that they be earnestly pleaded for. And this is that which the apostle Jude intends, verse 3, where he exhorts us ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι, to "contend," "strive," "wrestle" with all earnestness and the utmost of our endeavours, "for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" namely, because of the opposition that was then made unto it. And a truth may come under this qualification by persecution as well as by heretical opposition. Satan is always awake and attentive unto his advantages: and therefore though he hates all truth, yet doth he not at all times equally attempt upon every thing that is so; but he waiteth to see an inclination in men, from their lusts, or prejudices, or interests in this world, against any especial truth, or way of divine worship which God hath appointed. When he finds things so ready prepared, he falls to his work, and stirs up persecution against it. This makes that truth to be "the present truth" to be contended for, as that wherein

God will try the faith, and obedience, and patience of the church. And the reasons why we ought with all care, diligence, and perseverance, to attend unto the preservation and profession of such truths, are obvious unto all.

Obs. II. Important truths should be strongly confirmed.—Such is that here pleaded by the apostle; and therefore doth he so labour in the confirmation of it. He had undertaken to convince the Hebrews of the cessation of their legal worship, out of their own acknowledged principles. He deals not with them merely by his apostolical authority, and by virtue of the divine revelation of the will of God which himself had received; but he proceeds with them on arguments taken out of the types, institutions, and testimonies of the Old Testament, all which they owned and acknowledged, though without his aid they had not understood the meaning of them. On this supposition it was necessary for him to plead and press all the arguments from the topic mentioned which had any cogency in them; and he doth so accordingly.

Obs. III. Arguments that are equally true may yet, on the account of evidence, not be equally cogent; yet,—

Obs. IV. In the confirmation of the truth, we may use every help that is true and seasonable, though some of them may be more effectual unto our end than others.

This we are instructed in by the apostle affirming, in this place, that what he now affirms is "yet far more evident." And this evidence, as we observed before, may respect either the things themselves, or the efficacy in point of argument. For in themselves all things under the old testament were typical, and significant of what was afterwards to be introduced. So our apostle tells us that the ministry of Moses consisted in giving "testimony to those things which were to be spoken" or "declared afterwards," Heb. 3:5. But among them some were far more clear and evident, as to their signification than others were. In the latter sense, the things which he had discoursed about Melchisedec and his priesthood were more effectually demonstrative of the change of the Levitical priesthood, than what he had newly observed concerning the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ, not of the tribe of Levi, but of Judah, although that had life and evidence also in itself, which is principally intended.

The argument itself is nextly expressed whereunto this full evidence is ascribed, Εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισεδὲκ ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος,—"If another priest do arise, after the similitude of Melchisedec." And in the words there is, 1. The modification of the proposition, in the particle εἰ. 2. The notation of the

subject spoken of: "another priest." 3. His introduction into his office: "he did arise." 4. The nature of his office, and the manner of his coming into it: "after the likeness of Melchisedec."

Εἰ. 1. Εἰ, "if," is generally taken here not to be a conditional, but a causal conjunction. And so, as many judge, it is used, Rom. 8:31; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Thess. 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:17. And it is rendered in our translation by "for,"—"For that another priest;" as Beza rendereth it by "quod," "because;" others by "ex eo quòd," and "siquidem;" Syr., "And again, this is more known, by that which he said." All take it to be an intimation of a reason proving what is affirmed. And so it doth if, with the Vulgar, we retain "si," or "siquidem," "if so be:" "And it is yet far more evident, if so be that another priest."

As to the argument in general, we must observe, (1.) That the design of the apostle in this place is not to demonstrate the dignity and eminency of the priesthood of Christ from that of Melchisedec, his type, which he had done before sufficiently; he doth not produce the same words and arguments again unto the same purpose: but that which he aims at is, from that testimony, whereby he had proved the dignity of the priesthood of Christ, now also to prove the necessary abolition of the Levitical priesthood. Wherefore, (2.) He doth not insist on the whole of the testimony before pleaded, but only on that one thing of "another priest," necessarily included therein.

Ἱερεὺς ἕτερος. 2. The subject spoken of is, ἱερεὺς ἕτερος: that is, not merely אַחֵר; that is, ἄλλος, "alius," as the Syriac understood it, who renders it by אַחֲרִינָא;" but it is זָר, "alienus," that is intended. Every זָר was by the law absolutely forbidden to approach unto the priest's office, or altar, or sacred employment. So ἕτερος, "another," in this case is "a stranger," one that is not of the house or family of Aaron. And nothing can be more evident, than that the Levitical priesthood, and the whole law of divine worship, must be taken away and abolished then, if it appear that any זָר, ἕτερος, or "stranger," may be admitted into that office; much more, if it were necessary that it should so be. For the law of the priesthood took care of nothing more than that no stranger, that was not of the house of Aaron, should be called to that office. See Exod. 29:33; Lev. 22:10; Num. 1:51, 3:10: "Aaron and his sons they shall wait on the priest's office; וְהַזָּר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת, and the stranger that cometh nigh" (that is, to discharge any sacerdotal duty) "shall be put to death." And God gave an eminent instance of his severity with respect unto this law in the punishment of Korah, though of the tribe of Levi, for the transgression of it. And he caused a

perpetual memorial to be kept of that punishment, to the end they might know that "no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD," Num. 16:40. And hence our apostle in the next verse observes, that this priest was not to be "made after the law of a carnal commandment," seeing his making was a dissolution of that law or commandment. If, therefore, there must be ἱερεὺς ἕτερος, "another priest," that was not of the lineage of Aaron, the other is abolished.

Ἀνίσταται. 3. His introduction into his office is expressed by *ἀνίσταται*, "there ariseth." "Oritur," "exoritur." Syr., קָאֵם, "surgit;" Vulg. Lat., "exsurgat;"—"arose," in an extraordinary manner: Judg. 5:7, "Until I Deborah arose, I arose a mother in Israel;" that is, by an extraordinary call from God to be a prophetess and a deliverer. Deut. 18:18, "I will raise them up a Prophet;" which was Christ himself. So God "raised up an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David," Luke 1:69; that is, with an extraordinary power and glory. So was this priest to arise; not springing out of, nor succeeding in any order of priesthood before established. But all things in the law lay against his introduction; and the body of the people in the church was come unto the highest defiance of any such priest. But as God had foresignified what he would do, when the time of the reformation of all things should come, so when he performed his word herein, he did it in that manner, with that evidence of his glory and power, as introduced him against all opposition. For when the appointed time is come wherein the decrees of God shall bring forth, and his counsel be accomplished, all difficulties, though appearing insuperable, shall vanish and disappear, Zech. 4:6, 7.

Ομοιότητα. 4. The nature of his priesthood is declared, in its resemblance unto that of Melchisedec,—*κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα*. The apostle intendeth not to express the words of the psalmist, עַל־דִּבְרָתִי, which he constantly renders *κατὰ τάξιν*, "according unto the order;" but he respects the whole conformity that was between Melchisedec and our Lord Jesus Christ, in the instances which he had before insisted on. For whereas God had ordered all things in the Scripture concerning Melchisedec, that he might be *ἀφωμοιωμένος τῷ Υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, verse 3, "made like unto the Son of God," he is said to arise *καθj ὁμοιότητα*, "according to the likeness" or "similitude of Melchisedec." For every similitude is mutual; one thing is as like unto another as that is unto it. This, therefore, is evident, that there was to be another priest,—*ἕτερος*; not only *ἄλλος*, merely "another," but *ἀλλογενής*, one of "another stock and race:" and a priest he was to be "after the similitude of Melchisedec," and not so much as after the similitude of

Aaron. The arising of Christ in his offices puts an end unto all other things that pretend a usefulness unto the same end with them. When he arose as a king, he did not put an end unto the office and power of kings in the world,—but he did so unto the typical kingdoms over the church,—as he did to the priesthood by arising as a priest. And when he ariseth spiritually in the hearts and consciences of believers, an end is put unto all other things that they might before look for life, or righteousness, or salvation by.

Ver. 16.—This verse containeth an illustration and confirmation of the foregoing assertion, by a declaration of the way and manner how this other priest, who was not of the seed of Aaron, should come into that office. And this was necessary also, for the prevention of an objection which the whole discourse was obnoxious unto. For it might be said, that whatever was affirmed concerning another priest, yet there was no way possible whereby any one might come so to be, unless he were of the family of Aaron. All others were expressly excluded by the law. Nor was there any way or means ordained of God, any especial sacrifice instituted, whereby such a priest might be dedicated, and initiated into his office. In prevention of this objection, and in confirmation of what was before declared, the apostle adds, "Who was made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

The words declare, 1. That this priest was made so; and, 2. How he was made so, both negatively and positively.

Γέγονε. 1. He was made so; ὃς γέγονε,—"which priest was made," or "who was made a priest." The force of this expression hath been explained on chap. 3:2, 5:5. The Lord Christ did not merely on his own authority and power take this office upon himself; he became so, he was made so by the appointment and designation of the Father. Nor did he do any thing, in the whole work of his mediation, but in obedience unto his command, and in compliance with his will. For it is the authority of God alone which is the foundation of all office, duty, and power in the church. Even what Christ himself is and was unto the church, he is and was so by the grace and authority of God, even the Father. By him was he sent, his will did he perform, through his grace did he die, by his power was he exalted, and with him doth he intercede. What acts of God in particular do concur unto the constitution of this office of Christ, and to the making him a priest, have been declared before.

Νόμος ἐντολῆς. 2. The manner of his being made a priest is first expressed negatively: Οὐ κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκικῆς,—"Not after," (or "not according unto") "the law of a carnal commandment." Syr., ܕܦܘܩܕܢܐ ܦܓܪܢܝܐ,—"the law of bodily commandments." It is unquestionable, that the apostle by this expression intendeth in the first place the law of the Levitical priesthood, or the way and manner whereby the Aaronical priests were first called and vested with their office; and then any other law, constitution rule, or order of the same kind. He was made a priest neither by that law, nor any other like unto it. And two things we must enquire into: (1.) Why the call of the Aaronical priests is said to be "after the law of commandment." (2.) Why this commandment is said to be "fleshly:"—

(1.) For the first, we may observe, that the whole law of worship among the Jews is called by our apostle, ὁ νόμος τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασι, Eph. 2:15,—"The law of commandments in ordinances." And it is so called for two reasons:—

[1.] Because commands were so multiplied therein that the whole law was denominated from them. Hence it became ζύγος δυσβάστακτος,—a "yoke hardly to be borne," if not altogether intolerable, Acts 15:10. [2.] Because of that severity wherewith obedience was exacted. A command in its formal notion expresseth authority; and the multiplication of them, severity: and both these God designed to make eminent in that law; whence it hath this denomination, "a law of commandments." Hereof the law of the constitution of the office of the priesthood, and the call of Aaron thereunto, was a part; and he was therefore made a priest by "the law of commandments,"—that is, by a preceptive law, as a part of that system of commands wherein the whole law consisted. See this law and all the commands of it, Exod. 28 throughout.

Σαρκικῆς. (2.) Why doth the apostle call this commandment "carnal" or "fleshly?" Ans. It may be on either of these three accounts:—

[1.] With respect unto the sacrifices, which were the principal part of the consecration of Aaron unto his office. And these may be called "fleshly" on two accounts: 1st. Because of their subject-matter; they were flesh, or the bodies of beasts: as the Syriac reads these words, "the commandment of bodies;" that is, of beasts to be sacrificed. 2dly. In themselves and their relation unto the Jewish state, they reached no farther than the purifying of the flesh. They "sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh," as the apostle speaks, Heb. 9:13. And thus the whole commandment should be denominated from the principal subject-matter, or the offering of fleshly sacrifices, unto the purifying of the flesh.

[2.] It may be called "carnal," because a priesthood was instituted thereby which was to be continued by carnal propagation only; the priesthood appointed by that law was confined unto the carnal seed and posterity of Aaron, wherein this other priest had no interest.

[3.] Respect may be had unto the whole system of those laws and institutions of worship which our apostle, as was also before observed, calls "carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation," Heb. 9:10. They were all carnal, in opposition unto the dispensation of the Spirit under the gospel, and the institutions thereof.

None of these ways was the Lord Christ made a priest. He was not dedicated unto his office by the sacrifice of beasts, but sanctified himself thereunto when he offered himself through the eternal Spirit unto God, and was consummated in his own blood. He was not of the carnal seed of Aaron, nor did, nor could, claim any succession unto the priesthood by virtue of an extraction from his race. And no constitution of the law in general, no ordinance of it, did convey unto him either right or title unto the priesthood.

It is therefore evident that he was in no sense made a priest "according to the law of a carnal commandment;" neither had he either right, power, or authority to exercise the sacerdotal function in the observance of any carnal rites or ordinances whatever. And we may observe,—

Obs. V. That what seemed to be wanting unto Christ in his entrance into any of his offices, or in the discharge of them, was on the account of a greater glory. —Aaron was made a priest with a great outward solemnity. The sacrifices which were offered, and the garments he put on, with his visible separation from the rest of the people, had a great ceremonial glory in them. There was nothing of all this, nor any thing like unto it, in the consecration of the Lord Christ unto his office. But yet, indeed, these things had no glory, in comparison of that excelling glory which accompanied those invisible acts of divine authority, wisdom, and grace, which communicated his office unto him. And indeed, in the worship of God, who is a spirit, all outward ceremony is a diminution and debasement of it. Hence were ceremonies "for beauty and for glory" multiplied under the old testament; but yet, as the apostle shows, they were all but "carnal." But as the sending of Christ himself, and his investiture with all his offices, were by secret and invisible acts of God and his Spirit; so all evangelical worship, as to

the glory of it, is spiritual and internal only. And the removal of the old pompous ceremonies from our worship is but the taking away of the veil which hindered from an insight and entrance into the holy place.

Ἀλλά. Secondly. The way and manner whereby the Lord Christ was made a priest is expressed positively: Ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου,—"But according unto the power of an indissoluble life." Ἀλλά denotes an opposition between the way rejected and this asserted, as those which were not consistent. He was not made a priest that way, but this.

Κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου. How then is Christ made a priest "according to the power of an endless life?" That is, saith one in his paraphrase, "installed into the priesthood after his resurrection." What is meant by "installed," I well know not. It should seem to be the same with τελειωθείς, "consecrated," "dedicated," "initiated." And if so, this exposition diverts wholly from the truth; for Christ was installed into his office of priesthood before his resurrection, or he did not offer himself as a sacrifice unto God in his death and blood-shedding. And to suppose that the Lord Christ discharged and performed the principal act of his sacerdotal office, which was but once to be performed, before he was installed a priest, is contradictory to Scripture and reason itself. "Ideo ad vitam immortalem perductus est, ut in æternum sacerdos noster esset,"—"He was therefore brought unto an immortal life, that he might be our priest for ever,"—saith another. But this is not to be "made a priest according to the power of an endless life." If he means, that he might always continue to be a priest, and to execute that office always, unto the consummation of all things, what he says is true, but not the sense of this place: but if he means, that he became immortal after his resurrection, that he might be our priest, and abide so for ever, it excludes his oblation in his death from being a proper sacerdotal act; which that it was, I have sufficiently proved elsewhere, against Crellius and others.

Some think that the "endless life" intended is that of believers, which the Lord Christ, by virtue of his priestly office, confers upon them. The priests under the law proceeded no farther but to discharge carnal rites, which could not confer eternal life on them for whom they ministered; but the Lord Christ, in the discharge of his office, procureth "eternal redemption" and "everlasting life" for believers. And these things are true, but they comprise not the meaning of the apostle in this place. For how can Christ be made a priest according to the power of that eternal life which he confers on others? For the comparison and opposition that is made between "the law of a carnal commandment," whereby

Aaron was constituted a priest, and "the power of an endless life," whereby Christ was made so, do evidence, that the making of Christ a priest, not absolutely, which the apostle treats not of, but such a priest as he is, was the effect of this "endless life."

Wherefore the ζωὴ ἀκαταλυτος, the "indissoluble life" here intended, is the life of Christ himself. Hereunto belonged, or from hence did proceed, that δύναμις, or "power," whereby he was made a priest. And both the office itself and the execution or discharge of it are here intended. And as to the office itself, this eternal or endless life of Christ is his life as the Son of God. Hereon depends his own mediatory life for ever, and his conferring of eternal life on us, John 5:26, 27. And to be a priest by virtue of, or according unto this "power," stands in direct opposition unto "the law of a carnal commandment."

It must therefore be inquired, how the Lord Christ was made a priest according unto this "power." And I say, it was because thereby alone he was rendered meet to discharge that office, wherein God was to "redeem his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28. By "power," therefore, here, both meetness and ability are intended. And both these the Lord Christ had, from his divine nature and his endless life therein.

Or it may be the life of Christ in his human nature is intended, in opposition unto those priests who, being made so "by the law of a carnal commandment," did not continue in the discharge of their office, "by reason of death," as our apostle observes afterwards. But it will be said, that this natural life of Christ, the life of the human nature, was not endless, but had an end put unto it in the dissolution of his soul and body on the cross.

I say, therefore, this life of Christ was not absolutely the life of the human nature considered separately from his divine; but it was the life of the person of the Son of God, of Christ as God and man in one person. And so his life was endless. For, (1.) In the death which he underwent in his human nature there was no interruption given unto his discharge of his sacerdotal office, no, not for a moment. For, (2.) His person still lived, and both soul and body were therein inseparably united unto the Son of God. Although he was truly and really dead in his human nature, he was still alive in his indissoluble person. And this the apostle hath a respect unto in the testimony which he cites in the next verse to prove that he is a priest for ever. The "carnal commandment" gave authority and efficacy unto the Levitical priests; but Christ is made a priest "according to the power of an endless life,"—that is, through the power and efficacy of that

eternal life which is in his divine person, both his human nature is preserved always in the discharge of his office, and he is enabled thereby to work out eternal life on the behalf of them for whom he is a priest.

And so the apostle proves the difference of this other priest from those of the order of Aaron, not only from the tribe whereof he was to be, and from his type, Melchisedec, but also from the way and means whereby the one and the other were enabled to discharge their office.

Ver. 17.—The proof of all before asserted is given in the testimony of the psalmist so often before appealed to: "For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Μαρτυρεῖ. The introduction of this testimony is by μαρτυρεῖ γάρ, or "he witnesseth," or "testifieth;" that is, David doth in the psalm,—or rather, the Holy Ghost, speaking in and by David, doth so testify. He doth not absolutely say that so he speaketh, but testifieth; because he used his words in a way of testimony unto what he had delivered. And although one thing be now principally intended by him, yet there is in these words a testimony given unto all the especial heads of his discourse: as, 1. Σὺ ἱερεύς. That there was to be "another priest," a priest that was not of the stock of Aaron, nor tribe of Levi; for he says unto the Messiah, prophesied of, who was to be of the seed of David, "Thou art a priest," although a stranger from the Aaronical line. 2. That this other priest was to be "after the order of Melchisedec," and was not to be called after the order of Aaron. Κατὰ τάξιν. For he was עַל־דִּבְרָתִי, κατὰ τάξιν, "after the order." is a redundant, and not a suffix. דִּבְרַת is from דָּבַר; and signifies a state or order of things: אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי עַל־דִּבְרַת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, Eccles. 3:18;—"I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men," their condition and order of all things; that is, τάξις. The priesthood of Christ, in the mind of God, was the eternal idea or original exemplar of the priesthood of Melchisedec. God brought him forth, and vested him with his office, in such a way and manner as that he might outwardly represent in sundry things the idea of the priesthood of Christ in his own mind. Hence he and his priesthood became an external exemplar of the priesthood of Christ, as unto its actual exhibition: and therefore is he said to be "made a priest after his order;" that is, suitably unto the representation made thereof in him. 3. That he was made a priest,—namely, by him and his authority who said unto him, "Thou art a priest;" as chap. 5:5, 6, 10. 4. That he was so "after the power of an endless life;" for he was "a priest for ever." This word is applied to the law and legal priesthood, and signifies a

duration commensurate unto the state and condition of the things whereunto it is applied. There was an עוֹלָם of the law, an "age," whereunto its continuance was confined. So long all the promises annexed unto it stood in force. And as ascribed unto the new state of things under the gospel, it doth not signify eternity absolutely, but a certain unchangeable duration unto the end of the time and works of the gospel; for then shall the exercise of the priesthood of Christ cease, with his whole mediatory work and office, 1 Cor. 15:28. Christ, therefore, is said to be "a priest for ever:" 1. In respect of his person, endued with an "endless life." 2. Of the execution of his office unto the final end of it; "he liveth for ever to make intercession." 3. Of the effect of his office; which is to "save believers unto the utmost," or with an "everlasting salvation."

And the apostle had sufficient reason to affirm that what he proposed was eminently "manifest," namely, from the testimony which he produceth thereof. For what can be more evident than that the Aaronical priesthood was to be abolished, if so be that God had designed and promised to raise up another priest in the church, who was neither of the stock nor order of Aaron, nor called the same way to his office as he was; and who, when he was so raised and called, was to continue "a priest for ever," leaving no room for the continuance of that priesthood in the church, nor place for its return when it was once laid aside? And we may observe, that,—

Obs. VI. The eternal continuance of Christ's person gives eternal continuance and efficacy unto his office.—Because he lives for ever, he is a priest for ever. His endless life is the foundation of his endless priesthood. Whilst he lives we want not a priest; and therefore he says, that "because he liveth, we shall live also."

Obs. VII. To make new priests in the church, is virtually to renounce the faith of his living for ever as our priest, or to suppose that he is not sufficient to the discharge of his office.

Obs. VIII. The alteration that God made in the church, by the introduction of the priesthood of Christ, was progressive towards its perfection.—To return, therefore, unto or look after legal ceremonies in the worship of God, is to go back unto poor, "beggarly elements" and "rudiments of the world."

Hebrews 7: 18, 19

In the twelfth verse of this chapter the apostle affirms, that "the priesthood being changed, there was of necessity a change made of the law also." Having proved the former, he now proceeds to confirm his inference from it, by declaring that the priest and priesthood that were promised to be introduced were in all things inconsistent with the law. In that place he mentions only a μετάθεσις, or "change" of the law. But he intended not an alteration to be made in it, so as that, being changed and mended, it might be restored unto its former use; but it was such a change of it as was an ἀθέτησις, an "abrogation" of it, as in these verses he doth declare.

Now this was a matter of the highest concernment unto the Hebrews, and of great importance in itself; for it included and carried along with it an alteration of the whole state of the church, and of all the solemn worship of God therein. This, therefore, was not to be done but on cogent reasons and grounds indispensable. And no doubt but the apostle foresaw what a surprisal it would be unto the generality of the Hebrews, to hear that they must quit all their concern and special interest in the law of Moses. For he had three sorts of persons to deal withal in this great cause:—

1. Such as adhered unto and maintained the Mosaical institutions, in opposition unto Christ and the whole way of our coming unto God by him. These esteemed it the greatest blasphemy imaginable, for any to affirm that the law was to be changed or abrogated. And this was the occasion of the death of the first martyr of Jesus Christ,—under the accusation of blasphemy, which by the law was to be punished with death. For this they made their charge against Stephen, that he "spake blasphemous words against Moses," (whom they put in the first place,) "and against God," Acts 6:11. And the proof of this blasphemy they lay on these words, "that Jesus should change the customs which Moses had delivered to them." Accordingly, on this very account, they stirred up persecution with rage and madness against the holy apostles all the world over. The mouths of these cursed unbelievers were to be stopped; and therefore cogent reasons and unanswerable were in this case to be urged by the apostle; and they are so accordingly. And they were now to know, that notwithstanding all their rage and bluster, those that believed were not ashamed of the gospel; and they must be told that the law was to be abrogated, whether they would hear or forbear, however they were provoked or enraged thereby.

2. There were others of them who, although they received the gospel and believed in Christ, yet were persuaded that the law was still in force, and the worship prescribed in it still to be observed. And of these there were very great multitudes, as the apostle declares, Acts 21:20. This error was, in the patience of God, for a while tolerated among them, because the time of their full conviction was not yet come. But those who were possessed with it began, after a while, to be very troublesome unto the church, and would not be content to observe the law themselves, but would impose the observation of it on all the Gentile converts, on the pain of eternal damnation: Acts 15:1, "They said" and contended, "that unless they were circumcised, after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved." These also were to be restrained and convinced. And those of them who were obstinate in this persuasion, not long after apostatized from the whole of Christianity. And,—

3. There were sincere believers, whose faith was to be strengthened and confirmed. With respect unto them all the apostle laboureth with great diligence in this argument, and evidently proves, both that it was the will and purpose of God that the administration of the law should have an end, and also that the time was now come wherein it was to cease and be abrogated. This, therefore, he proceeds withal in these verses.

Ver. 18, 19.—Ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγούσης ἐντολῆς, διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος, ἐπεισαγωγὴ δὲ κρείττονος ἐλπίδος, δι᾽ ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ Θεῷ.

Ἀθέτησις. Vulg. Lat., "reprobatio;" Rhem., "reprobation;"—most improperly. Syr., ܫܝܚܠܦܐ, "mutatio," a "change;" which reacheth not the force of the word. Ar., "abrogatio." Bez., "fit irritum;" that is, "mandatum." Ἀθετέω is rendered, "loco moveo," "abrogo," "abdico," "irritum facio,"—"to take out of the way," "to abrogate," "to disannul," "to make void;" and for the most part it hath respect unto a rule, law, or command, that was or is in force. Sometimes it is used of a person, who ought in duty to be regarded and honoured, but is despised; Luke 10:16, John 12:48, where it is rendered to "despise." So 1 Thess. 4:8, Jude 8. Sometimes it represents things, Gal. 2:21, 1 Tim. 5:12. But commonly it respects a law, and is applied unto them who are absolutely under the power of the law, or such in whose power the law is. The first sort are said to "make void the law," when they transgress it, neglecting the authority whereby it is given, Mark 7:9, Heb. 10:28. But when this word is applied unto him who hath power over the law, it signifies the abrogation of it, so far as that it shall have no more power to

oblige unto its observance. Ἀθέτησις is used nowhere in the New Testament but here and chap. 9:26. Here it is applied unto the law, being the taking away of its power to oblige unto obedience; there unto sin, denoting the abrogating of its power to condemn.

Μὲν γάρ, "quidem," "equidem," "enim." Syr., דֵּין, "autem," "but." "For verily."

Προαγούσης ἐντολῆς, "præcedentis mandati." The Syriac thus renders the verse, "The change which was made in the first commandment was made for its weakness, and because there was no profit in it."

Διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενές, "propter ipsius imbecillitatem;" "infirmitatem;" "propter illud quod in eo erat infirmum aut imbecille."

Καὶ ἀνωφελές, "et inutilitatem." וְדִיוּתְרָן לֵית הֲוָא בֵּהּ, Syr., "and because there was no profit in it."

The Arabic changeth the sense of the place, reading to this purpose, "For there is a transgression where the commandment went before, because that was weak and of little advantage."

Οὐδὲν γάρ. Syr., מִדֵּם גֵּיר לָא, "non enim aliquid;" that is, "nihil."

Ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος. Syr., גְּמַר, "perfecit lex;" "finished," "perfected." Beza, "consummavit." Vulg. Lat., "ad perfectum adduxit." Rhem., "brought nothing to perfection." Others, "sanctificavit." Syr., "for the law did not perfect any thing."

Ἐπεισαγωγὴ δὲ κρείττονος ἐλπίδος. Vulg., "introductio verò melioris spei." Beza, "sed superintroducta spes potior." Others, "sed erat introductio ad spem potiorem." Syr., עַל דֵּין חֲלָפַוהִי סַבְרָא דַּמְיַתַר מָנֵּהּ דְּבֵהּ; "but there entered in the room thereof a hope more excellent than it." Ἐπεισαγωγή is "supraintroductio," or "postintroductio;" the bringing in of one thing after another. Some supply "erat" here, and read the words, "sed erat introductio ad spem potiorem," or "spei melioris."

Ἐγγίζομεν, "appropinquamus," "accedimus." Vulg., "proximamus." Rhem. "we approach."

Our own translation fully expresseth the original in all the parts of it, only it determines the sense of verse 19, by the insertion of that word, "did."

Ver. 18, 19.—For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God.

1. The subject spoken of is the "command." 2. Described by the time of its giving; it "went before." 3. Hereof it is affirmed, that it is "disannulled." And, 4. The reason thereof is adjoined, from a twofold property or adjunct of it in particular: for, (1.) It was "weak;" (2.) It was "unprofitable." 5. As unto its deficiency from its general end; "it made nothing perfect." 6. Illustrated by that which took its work upon itself, and effected it thoroughly; "the hope brought in, by which we draw nigh unto God."

τῆς ἐντολῆς. FIRST, The ἐντολή, or "command," is of as large a signification, verse 18, as νόμος, "the law," in verse 19; for the same thing is intended in both the words. It is not, therefore, the peculiar command for the institution of the legal priesthood that is intended, but the whole system of Mosaical institutions. For the apostle having already proved that the priesthood was to be abolished, he proceeds on that ground and from thence to prove that the whole law was also to be in like manner abolished and removed. And indeed it was of such a nature and constitution, that pull one pin out of the fabric, and the whole must fall unto the ground; for the sanction of it being, that "he was cursed who continued not in all things written in the law to do them," the change of any one thing must needs overthrow the whole law. How much more must it do so, if that be changed, removed, or taken away, which was not only a material part of it, but the very hinge whereon the whole observance of it did depend and turn!

And the whole of this system of laws is called ἐντολή, a "command," because it consisted ἐν δόγμασι, in "arbitrary commands" and precepts, regulated by that maxim, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them," Rom. 10:5. And therefore the law, as a command, is opposed unto the gospel, as a promise of righteousness by Jesus Christ, Gal. 3:11, 12. Nor is it the whole ceremonial law only that is intended by "the command" in this place, but the moral law also, so far as it was compacted with the other into one body of precepts for the same end; for with respect unto the efficacy of the whole law of Moses, as unto our drawing nigh unto God, it is here considered.

Προαγούσης. SECONDLY, This commandment is described by the time of its giving: it is προάγουσα, it "went before;" that is, before the gospel as now preached and dispensed. It did not do so absolutely; for our apostle shows and proves, that as to the promise, whereby the grace of the new covenant was exhibited, and which contained the substance and essence of the gospel, it was given four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, Gal. 3:17.

Wherefore, the precedency of the law here expressed may respect the testimony produced out of David, whereby the apostle proves the cessation of the priesthood, and consequently of the law itself; for the command was given before that testimony, and so went before it. But it rather respects the actual introduction of a new priest, in the accomplishment of this promise; for hereon the whole change and alteration in the law and worship pleaded for by our apostle did ensue. The "commandment going before," is the law whereby the worship of God and obedience unto him were regulated before the coming of Christ, and the introduction of the gospel.

Μὲν γὰρ γίνεται. THIRDLY, Of this command, or law, it is affirmed that there is an ἀθέτησις, and that with some earnestness: Ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται, —"For truly," "verily," "certainly." This, whatever it be, came not to pass of its own accord, but it was made by him who had power and authority so to do; which must be the lawgiver.

Ἀθέτησις. Ἀθέτησις may respect a law, as was before intimated, either on the account of the lawgiver, him that hath power over it, or of those unto whom it is given as a law, and who are under the power of it. In the latter sense, ἀθετέω is to "transgress a law," to make it void what lies in us, by contemning the authority of him by whom it is given; that use of the word was before observed, in Mark 7:9, Heb. 10:28. In the first sense it is directly opposed unto νομοθεσία,—that is, the "giving," "presenting," and "promulgating of a law," by a just and due authority, whence it hath a power and force to oblige unto obedience. Ἀθέτησις is the dissolution hereof. The word, as was said even now, is once more used in the New Testament, and that by our apostle in this epistle, chap. 9:26: "Christ hath appeared εἰς ἀθέτησιν ἁμαρτίας,"—"to put away sin," say we, "by the sacrifice of himself;" that is, to the abrogation or abolishing of that power which sin hath by its guilt to bind over sinners unto punishment. So the ἀθέτησις of the law is its "abrogation," in taking away all its power of obliging unto obedience or punishment. The apostle elsewhere expresseth the same act by καταργέω, Eph. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10.

It is therefore plainly declared, that the law is "abrogated," "abolished," "disannulled." But we must yet further inquire, 1. How this could be done; 2. By what means it was done; and, 3. (which himself adds expressly) For what reason it was done.

The first of these seems not to be without its difficulties. For it was a law originally given unto the church by God himself, and continued therein with his approbation for many generations; and there are multiplied instances in the sacred records of his blessing them who were faithful and obedient in its observation; yea, the whole prosperity of the church did always depend thereon, as its neglect was always accompanied with severe tokens of God's displeasure. Besides, our Saviour affirmeth of himself that he "came not καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον," Matt. 5:17,—"to dissolve" or "destroy the law:" which upon the matter is the same with ἀθετῆσαι; for if a law be disannulled or abrogated, it is totally dissolved as to its obligatory power. And our apostle removes the suspicion of any such thing from the doctrine of the gospel, Rom. 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Ans. There are two ways whereby any law may be disannulled or abrogated: First, By taking away all authority and use from it as unto its proper end, whilst it is in its pretended force. For suppose it to be made for ever, or for a time only, its abrogation is its deprivation of all authority and use as a law. And this cannot regularly be done but on one of these accounts: 1. That the authority giving the law was not valid from the beginning, but men have been obliged unto it on a false presumption thereof. 2. That the matter of it was never good, or useful, or meet to be made the matter of law. On neither of these accounts could this law be abolished, nor ever was so by the Lord Christ or the gospel, nor is so to this day. For God himself was the immediate author of it, whose authority is sovereign and over all: and thence also it follows that the matter of it was good; for "the commandment," as our apostle speaks, "is holy, and just, and good," Rom. 7:12. And however there be a difference between that which is morally good in itself and its own nature, and that which is so only by divine institution, yet the revealed will of God is the adequate rule of good and evil unto us, as unto our obedience. On these accounts, therefore, it never was, nor ever could be abolished.

Secondly, A law may be abrogated, when, on any consideration whatever, its obligation unto practice doth cease or is taken away. Thus was it with this law; for, as every other law, it may be considered two ways:—

1. With respect unto its main end, and directive power to guide men therein. This, in all human laws, is the public good of the community or society unto whom they are given. When this ceaseth, and the law becomes not directive or useful unto the public good any more, all rational obligations unto its

observance do cease also. But yet this law differed also from all others. All that any other law aimeth at, is obedience unto itself, and the public good which that obedience will produce. So the moral law in the first covenant had no other end but obedience unto it, and the rewardableness thereon of them that did obey it. So was it an entire instrument of our living to God, and of eternal rewards thereon. But as, in its renovation, it was made a part of the law here intended, it came with it to be of another nature, or to have another use and end. For the whole scope and design of this law was to direct men, not to look after that good which was its end, in obedience unto itself, but to something else that it directed unto by that obedience. The end it directed unto was righteousness before God. But this could never be attained by an obedience unto it; nor was it ever intended that so it should do. This "the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," Rom. 8:3. And therefore those who pursued and followed after it with the most earnestness for this end, never attained thereunto, Rom. 9:31, 32. This end, therefore, is principally to be considered in this law; which when it is attained, the law is established, although its obligation unto obedience unto itself doth necessarily cease. Now this end of the law was Christ and his righteousness, as the apostle expressly declares: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. 10:4. And therefore this whole law was "our schoolmaster to Christ," Gal. 3:24, 25. This is called by our Saviour, πληρῶσαι τὸν νόμον, "to fulfil the law;" and is opposed unto the destroying of it, Matt. 5:17, "I came not ἀπολῦσαι," "to destroy" or "dissolve the law, but to fulfil it." That is, not to abrogate it, or take it away, as that which either wanted a just authority or was not good or useful,—the common reasons of the abrogation of any law in force;—but 'I came to bring in and accomplish the whole end which it aimed at, and directed unto;' whereon it would cease to oblige unto a further practice. And this the apostle calls ἱστάναι, "to establish the law:" "Do we then make void the law through faith? yea, we establish the law," Rom. 3:31. That is, 'we declare how it hath its end and full accomplishment;' which is the greatest establishment that any law is capable of. And if the fulfilling of the law, both as unto what it requires in a way of obedience, and what also in its curse for sin, be not imputed unto us, we do not by faith establish the law, but make it void.

2. The law may be considered with respect unto the particular duties that it required and prescribed. And because the whole law had its end, these were appointed only until that end might be, or was attained. So saith our apostle, "They were imposed until the time of reformation," Heb. 9:10. Wherefore two

things did accompany this law in its first institution: (1.) That an obedience unto its commands would not produce the good which it directed unto, as formally respecting the law itself. (2.) That the duties it required had a limited time for their performance and acceptance allotted unto them. Wherefore, without the least disparagement unto it, as unto the authority whereby it was given, or as unto its own holiness and goodness, it might be disannulled as unto its actual obligation unto practice and observance of its commands; for the end of it being fully accomplished, it is no less established than if the observance of it had been continued unto the end of the world.

It was therefore "established" by Christ and the gospel as unto its end, use, and scope; it was "disannulled" as unto its obligatory power unto the observance of its commands. For these two are inconsistent, namely, that a law as unto all its ends should be fulfilled, and yet stand in force in its obligatory power unto obedience.

Secondly, We must inquire how this was done, or how this law was abrogated as to its obligatory power and efficacy. And this was done two ways:—

First, Really and virtually. This was done by Christ himself in his own person. For the fulfilling and accomplishing of it was that which really and virtually took away all its obligatory power. For what should it oblige men unto? An answer is ready unto all its demands, namely, that they are fulfilled; and as unto what was significative in its duties, it is all really exhibited: so that on no account can it any more oblige or command the consciences of men. This the apostle sets out in a comparison with the relation that is between a man and his wife, with the obligation unto mutual duties that ensues thereon, Rom. 7:1–6: Whilst the husband is alive, the wife is obliged unto all conjugal duties towards him, and unto him alone; but upon his death that obligation ceaseth of itself, and she is at liberty to marry unto another. So were we obliged unto the law whilst it was alive, whilst it stood in its force and vigour; but when, through the death of Christ, the law was accomplished, it died as to the relation which was between it and us, whereon all its obligation unto observance was disannulled. This was that whereby the law was really and virtually abrogated. Its preceptive part being fulfilled, and its significative being exhibited, it was of no more force or efficacy as a law. The reason why it was thus to have an end put unto it, is declared in the close of the verse.

Secondly. It was so abrogated declaratively, or the will of God concerning its abrogation was made known four ways:—

1. In general, by the promulgation and preaching of the gospel, where the accomplishment and cessation of it was declared. For the declaration made that the Messiah was come, that he had finished his work in the world, and thereby "made an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness," whereby the law was fulfilled, did sufficiently manifest its abrogation. The apostles, I confess, in their first preaching to the Jews, spake not of it expressly, but left it to discover itself as an undeniable consequent of what they taught concerning the Lord Christ and the righteousness of God in him. This for some while many of them that believed understood not, and therefore were "zealous of the law;" which God in his patience and forbearance did graciously tolerate, so as not to impute it unto them. It was indeed great darkness and manifold prejudices that hindered the believing Jews from seeing the necessary consequence unto the abolition of the law from the promulgation of the gospel; yet this was God pleased to bear with them in, that we might not be too fierce, nor reflect with too much severity on such as are not able in all things to receive the whole truth as we desire they should.

2. It was so by the institution and introduction of new ordinances of worship. This was wholly inconsistent with the law, wherein it was expressly enacted that nothing should be added unto the worship of God therein prescribed. And if any such addition were made, by the authority of God himself, as was inconsistent with any thing before appointed, it is evident that the whole law was disannulled. But a new order, a new entire system of ordinances of worship, was declared in the gospel; yea, and those, some of them especially, as that of the Lord's supper, utterly inconsistent with any ordinances of the law, seeing it declares that to be done and past which they direct us unto as future and to come.

3. There was a determination made in the case by the Holy Ghost, upon an occasion administered thereunto. Those of the apostles who preached the gospel unto the Gentiles, had made no mention unto them of the law of Moses; as knowing that it was "nailed unto the cross of Christ, and taken out of the way." So were they brought unto the faith and obedience of the gospel without any respect unto the law, as that wherein they were not concerned, now it had received its accomplishment. But some of the Jews who believed, being yet persuaded that the law was to be continued in force, and its observation imposed on all that were proselyted by the gospel, occasion was given unto that solemn determination which was made by the apostles, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Acts 15. And the substance of that determination was this:—That

the gospel, as preached unto the Gentiles, was not a way or means of proselyting them unto Judaism, but of bringing them into a new church-state, by an interest in the promise and covenant of Abraham, given and made four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law. Whilst the law stood in its force, whoever was proselyted unto the truth, he was so unto the law; and every Gentile that was converted unto the true God was bound to be circumcised, and became obliged unto the whole law. But that being now disannulled, it is solemnly declared, that the Gentiles converted by the gospel were under no obligation unto the law of Moses, but being received into the covenant of Abraham, were to be gathered into a new church-state erected in and by the Lord Christ in the gospel.

4. As unto those of the Hebrews who yet would not understand these express declarations of the ceasing of the obligatory power of the law, to put an end unto all disputes about his will in this matter, God gave a dreadful ἀθέτησις or "abolition" unto it, in the total, final, irrevocable destruction of the city and temple, with all the instruments and vessels of its worship, especially of the priesthood, and all that belonged thereunto.

Thus was the law disannulled, and thus was it declared so to be.

Obs. I. It is a matter of the highest nature and importance, to set up or take away, to remove any thing from or change any thing in, the worship of God.—Unless the authority of God interpose, and be manifested so to do, there is nothing for conscience to rest in, in these things. And,—

Obs. II. The revelation of the will of God, in things relating unto his worship, is very difficultly received, where the minds of men are prepossessed with prejudices and traditions.—Notwithstanding all those ways whereby God had revealed his mind concerning the abolition of the Mosaical institutions, yet those Hebrews could neither understand it nor receive it, until the whole seat of its worship was destroyed and consumed.

Obs. III. The only securing principle, in all things of this nature, is to preserve our souls in an entire subjection unto the authority of Christ, and unto his alone.

Διὰ τὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀσθενές. Thirdly, The close of the verse gives an especial reason of the disannulling or abrogation of the command, taken from its own nature and efficacy: "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, διὰ τὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές:" that is, διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἀσθένειαν καὶ ἀνωφελίαν· the adjective in the neuter gender put for a substantive,

which is emphatical; as on the contrary it is so, when the substantive is put for the adjective, as 1 John 2:27, Ἀληθές ἐστι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι ψεῦδος,—"Is true, and is not a lie;" that is, "mendax," "false" or "lying." And αὐτῆς, "its own," is added, to show that the principal cause of disannulling the law was taken from the law itself.

I have proved before that "the commandment" in this verse is of equal extent and signification with "the law" in the next. And "the law" there doth evidently intend the whole law, in both the parts of it, moral and ceremonial, as it was given by Moses unto the church of Israel. And this whole law is here charged by our apostle with "weakness and unprofitableness;" both which make a law fit to be disannulled. But it must be acknowledged that there is a difficulty of no small importance in the assignation of these imperfections unto the law. For this law was given by God himself; and how can it be supposed that the good and holy God should prescribe such a law unto his people as was always weak and unprofitable. From this and the like considerations the blasphemous Manichees denied that the good God was the author of the Old Testament; and the Jews continue still upon it to reject the Gospel, as not allowing the least imperfection in the law, but equalling it almost with God himself. We must therefore consider in what sense the apostle ascribes these properties unto the law.

First, Some seek for a solution of this difficulty from Ezek. 20:11, compared with verse 25. Verse 11, God saith, "I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them." But verse 25, "I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." The first sort of laws, they say, was the decalogue, with those other judgments that accompanied it; which were given unto the people as God's covenant, before they broke it by making the golden calf. These were good in themselves, and good unto the people, so as if they did them they should live therein. But after the people had broken the covenant in making of a golden calf, God gave them that whole system of ordinances, institutions, and laws, which ensued. These, they say, in that place of Ezekiel God calls "statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live," as being imposed on the people in the way of punishment. And with respect unto these they say it is that the apostle affirms "the commandment was weak and unprofitable."

But as the application of this exposition unto this passage in the apostle's discourse is not consistent with the design of it, as will afterwards appear, so indeed the exposition itself is not defensible. For it is plain, that by the laws and

statutes mentioned verse 11, not any part of them, but the whole system of ordinances and commandments which God gave by Moses, is intended. And the two words in the text, חֻקִּים and מִשְׁפָּטִים, do express the whole law ceremonial and judicial. And it was not from this or that part, but from the whole law, that the people, as far as they were carnal, looked for righteousness and salvation, Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12. And as those laws and statutes mentioned verse 11 contained the whole law given by Moses, so those intended verse 25, whereof it is said that they were not good, nor could they live in the keeping of them, cannot be the laws and statutes of God considered in themselves. For it is inconsistent with the holiness, goodness, and wisdom of God, to give laws which, in themselves and their own nature, should not be good, but evil. Nor, on supposition that he had given them "statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live," could he plead, as he doth, that "his ways were equal," and that "their ways were unequal." For in these laws he evidently promised that "those who did them should live therein." Where is the equality, equity, and righteousness, if it were otherwise? Wherefore if the statutes of God be intended in the place, it must be with respect unto the people, their unbelief and obstinacy, that it is said of them, that "they were not good;" being made useless unto them by reason of sin. In that sense the apostle says, that "the commandment which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death," Rom. 7:10. But I rather judge, that having charged the people with neglect and contempt of the laws and judgments of God, which were good, God's giving them up judicially unto ways of idolatry and false worship, which they made as laws and judgments unto themselves, and "willingly walked after the commandment," as Hos. 5:11, is here so expressed. But there is no ground for such a distinction between the laws and judgments of God in themselves, that some of them should be good, and some of them should be not good; that in some of them men might live, but not in others.

Secondly, I answer, that the whole law may be considered two ways: 1. Absolutely in itself. 2. With respect, (1.) Unto the end for which it was given; (2.) Unto the persons unto whom it was given:—

In itself, no reflection can be made upon it, because it was an effect of the wisdom, holiness, and truth of God. But in the respects mentioned it manifests its own weakness and unprofitableness; for they were sinners unto whom it was given, and both defiled and guilty antecedently unto the giving of this law, being so by nature, and thereon "children of wrath." Two things they stood in need of in this condition:—

1. Sanctification by an inherent purity and holiness, with a complete righteousness from thence. This the moral law was at first the rule and measure of, and would have always effected it by its observance. It could never, indeed, take away any defilement of sin from the soul, but it could have prevented any such defilement. But now, with respect unto the persons unto whom it was given, it became "weak and unprofitable" unto any such end. It became so, saith the apostle, by reason of the flesh, Rom. 8:3. For although in itself it was a perfect rule of righteousness, Rom. 10:5, Gal. 3:12, 21, yet it could not be a cause or means of righteousness unto them who were disenabled, by the entrance of sin, to comply with it and fulfil it. Wherefore the moral law, which was in itself efficacious and useful, was now become unto sinners, as unto the ends of holiness and righteousness, "weak and unprofitable;" for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2. Sinners do stand in need of the expiation of sin; for being actually guilty already, it is to no purpose to think of a righteousness for the future, unless their present guilt be first expiated. Hereof there is not the least intimation in the moral law. It hath nothing in it, nor accompanying of it, that respects the guilt of sin, but the curse only. This, therefore, was to be expected from the ceremonial law, and the various ways of atonement therein provided, or no way at all. But this of themselves they could not effect. They did, indeed, represent and prefigure what would do so, but of themselves they were insufficient unto any such end. For "it is not possible," as our apostle speaks, "that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin," Heb. 10:4. And this law may be considered three ways: (1.) In opposition unto Christ, without respect unto its typical signification; under which notion it was now adhered unto by the unbelieving Hebrews. This being no state of it by divine appointment, it became thereby not only of no use unto them, but the occasion of their ruin. (2.) In competition and conjunction with Christ; and so it was adhered unto by many of these Hebrews who believed the gospel. And this also was a state not designed for it, seeing it was appointed only "until the time of reformation;" and therefore was not only useless, but noxious and hurtful. (3.) In subordination unto Christ, to typify and represent what was to be obtained in him alone; so during its own season it was of use unto that end, but yet could never effect the thing which it did represent. And in this state doth the apostle pronounce it "weak and unprofitable," namely, on a supposition that atonement and expiation of sin was actually to be made, which it could not reach unto.

But it may be yet further inquired, why God did give this law unto the people, which, although it was good in itself, yet, because of the condition of the people, it could not attain the end which was intended. The apostle gives so full an answer unto this inquiry, as that we need not further to insist upon it. For he giveth two reasons why God gave this law. 1. He saith, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made," Gal. 3:19. It had a manifold necessary respect unto transgression: as, (1.) To discover the nature of sin, that the consciences of men might be made sensible thereof. (2.) To coerce and restrain it, by its prohibition and threatenings, that it might not run out into such an excess as to deluge the whole church. (3.) To represent the way and means, though obscurely, whereby sin might be expiated. And these things were of so great use, that the very being of the church depended on them. 2. There was another reason for it, which he declares in the same place, verses 23, 24. It was to shut up men under a sense of the guilt of sin, and so with some severity drive them out of themselves, and from all expectation of a righteousness by their own works, that so they might be brought unto Christ, first in the promise, and then as he was actually exhibited.

This brief account of the weakness and unprofitableness of the law, whereon it was disannulled and taken away, may at present suffice. The consideration of some other things in particular will afterwards occur unto us. Only in our passage we may a little examine or reflect on the senses that some others have given unto these words.

Schlichtingius, in his comment on the next verse, gives this account of the state of the law: "Lex expiationem concedebat leviorum delictorum, idque ratione pœnæ alicujus arbitrariæ tantùm: gravioribus autem peccatis quibus mortis pœnam fixerat, nullam reliquerat veniam, maledictionis fulmen vibrans in omnes qui graviùs peccâssent." But these things are neither accommodated unto the purpose of the apostle nor true in themselves. For, 1. The law denounced the curse equally unto every transgression, be it small or great: "Cursed is he who continueth not in all things." 2. It expiated absolutely no sin, small or great, by its own power and efficacy; neither did it properly take away any punishment, temporal or eternal. That some sins were punished with death, and some were not, belonged unto the polity or the government erected among that people. But, 3. As unto the expiation of sin, the law had an equal respect

unto all the sins of believers, great and small; it typically represented the expiation of them all in the sacrifice of Christ, and so confirmed their faith as to the forgiveness of sin; but farther it could not proceed.

And Grotius on the place: "Non perduxit homines ad justitiam illam veram et internam, sed intra ritus et facta externa constitit.... Promissa terrestria non operantur mortis contemptum, sed eum operatur spes melior vitæ æternæ et cœlestis." Which is thus enlarged by another: "The Mosaical law got no man freedom from sin, was able to give no man strength to fulfil the will of God, and could not purchase pardon for any that had broken it. This, therefore, was to be done now afterwards by the gospel; which gives more sublime and plain promises of pardon of sin, which the law could not promise; of an eternal and heavenly life to all true penitent believers: which gracious tenders, now made by Christ, give us a freedom of access unto God, and confidence to come and expect such mercy from him." Ans. 1. What is here spoken, if it intend the law in itself, and its cardinal ordinances, without any respect unto the Lord Christ and his mediation, may in some sense be true; for in itself it could neither justify nor sanctify the worshippers, nor spiritually or eternally expiate sin. But, 2. Under the law, and by it, there was a dispensation of the covenant of grace, which was accompanied with promises of eternal life; for it did not only repeat and re-enforce the promise inseparably annexed unto the law of creation, "Do this, and live," but it had also other promises of spiritual and eternal things annexed unto it, as it contained a legal dispensation of the first promise or the covenant of grace. But, 3. The opposition here made by the apostle is not between the precepts of the law and the precepts of the gospel, the promises of the law and the promises of the gospel, outward righteousness and inward obedience; but between the efficacy of the law unto righteousness and salvation, by the priesthood and sacrifices ordained therein, on the one hand, and the priesthood of Christ, with his sacrifice, which was promised before and now manifested in the gospel, on the other. And herein he doth not only show the preference and dignity of the latter above the former, but also that the former of itself could do nothing unto these ends; but whereas they had represented the accomplishment of them for a season, and so directed the faith of the church unto what was future, that now being come and exhibited, it was of no more use nor advantage, nor meet to be retained.

Thus, then, was the law disannulled; and it was so actually by the means before mentioned. But that the church might not be surprised, there were many warnings given of it before it came to pass: as, 1. A mark was put upon it from

the very beginning, that it had not a perpetuity in its nature, nor inseparably annexed unto it: for it had no small presignification in it, that immediately upon the giving of it as a covenant with that people, they brake the covenant, in making the golden calf in Horeb; and thereon Moses brake the tables of stone wherein the law was written. Had God intended that this law should have been perpetual, he would not have suffered its first constitution to have been accompanied with an express emblem of its disannulling. 2. Moses expressly foretells, that after the giving of the law, God would "provoke them to anger by a foolish nation," Deut. 32:21, Rom. 10:19; that is, by the calling of the Gentiles, whereon "the wall of partition" that was between them, even "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," was of necessity to be taken out of the way. 3. The prophets frequently declared that it was of itself utterly insufficient for the expiation of sin, or the sanctification of sinners, and thereon preferred moral obedience above all its institutions; whence it necessarily follows, that seeing God did intend a τελείωσις, or "state of perfection," for his church, this law was at last to be disannulled. 4. All the promises concerning the coming of Christ as the end of the law, did declare its station in the church not to be perpetual; especially that insisted on by our apostle, of his being "a priest after the order of Melchisedec." 5. The promises and predictions are express, that a new covenant should be established with the church, unto the removal of the old; whereof we must treat in the next chapter. By all these ways was the church of the Hebrews forewarned that the time would come when the whole Mosaical law, as to its legal or covenant efficacy, should be disannulled, unto the unspeakable advantage of the church. And we may hence observe,—

Obs. IV. The introduction into the church of what is better and more full of grace, in the same kind with what went before, doth disannul what so preceded; but the bringing in of that which is not better, which doth not communicate more grace, doth not do so.—Thus our apostle expressly disputes that the bringing in of the law four hundred years after the giving of the promise, did not evacuate or any way enervate the promise. And the sole reason hereof was, because the promise had more grace and privilege in it than the law had. But here, the bringing in of another priesthood, because it was filled with more effectual grace and mercy, utterly disannulled that which was instituted before. And as we may hence learn the care and kindness of God unto the church, so also our own duty in adhering with constant obedience unto the institutions of Christ. For this must be so, until something else more full of grace and wisdom than they are be appointed of God in the church. And indeed this is that which

is pretended by those by whom they are rejected; for they tell us that the ordinances of the gospel are "weak and unprofitable," and are disannulled by that dispensation of the Spirit which hath ensued after them. But the truth is, to fancy a dispensation of the Spirit without, against, or above the ordinances of Christ, who alone doth dispense Him, and that in the ways of his own appointment, is to renounce the whole gospel.

Obs. V. If God would disannul every thing that was weak and unprofitable in his service, though originally of his own appointment, because it was not exhibitive of the grace he intended, he will much more condemn any thing of the same kind that is invented by men.—I could never yet understand why God should abolish those ordinances of worship which himself had appointed, because they were weak, and approve of such as men should find out of themselves, which cannot have the least efficacy or signification towards spiritual ends;—such as are multiplied in the Papacy.

Obs. VI. It is in vain for any man to look for that from the law, now it is abolished, which it could not effect in its best estate;—and what that is the apostle declares in the next verse.

Ver. 19.—"For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God."

Γάρ. FOURTHLY, The disannulling or abolition of the law was laid down in the precedent verse, as a necessary consequent of its being "weak and unprofitable." For when a law hath been tried, and it is found liable unto this charge, it is equal, and even necessary, that it should be disannulled; if the end aimed at be necessary to be attained, and there be any thing else to be substituted in its room whereby it may so be. This therefore the apostle declares in this verse, giving the reasons in particular of what he had before asserted in general. So the causal connection, γάρ, "for," doth intimate. And, 1. He gives an especial instance, wherein it was evident that the law was "weak and unprofitable." 2. He declares what was to be introduced in the room thereof, which would attain and effect the end which the law could not reach unto, by reason of its weakness. 3. He expresseth what that end was.

Ο νόμος. The first he doth in these words, Οὐδὲν γὰρ ὁ νόμος ἐτελείωσε,—"For the law made nothing perfect." The subject spoken of is ὁ νόμος, "the law;" that is, the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, as it was the covenant which God made with the people in Horeb. For the apostle takes "the commandment" and "the law" for the same in this chapter; and "the covenant," in the next, for the

same with them both. And he treats of them principally in the instance of the Levitical priesthood; partly because the whole administration of the law depended thereon; and partly because it was the introduction of another priesthood, whereby the whole was disannulled.

Οὐδέν. Of this law, commandment, or covenant, it is said that οὐδὲν ἐτελείωσε, "it made nothing perfect." Οὐδέν, "nothing," for οὐδένα, "no man," say expositors generally; "it made no man perfect." So the neuter is put for the masculine. So it is in those words of our Saviour, John 6:37, Πᾶν ὃ δίδωσί μοι ὁ Πατήρ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει,—"All that the Father giveth me cometh unto me;" that is, "every one." So is οὐδέν, as here, put for οὐδένα, verse 63: Ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν, —"The flesh profiteth nothing;" that is, say some, "no man." But I am not satisfied with this exposition, but rather judge that the apostle did properly express his intention. It made "nothing," that is, none of the things which we treat about, "perfect." It did not make the church-state perfect, it did not make the worship of God perfect, it did not perfect the promises given unto Abraham, in their accomplishment, it did not make a perfect covenant between God and man; it had a shadow, an obscure representation of all these things, but it "made nothing perfect."

Ἐτελείωσε. What the apostle intends by τελείωσις, and so consequently by ἐτελείωσε in this place, we have discoursed at large before on verse 11; so that we shall not here again insist upon it.

But it may be inquired why, if "the law made nothing perfect," it was instituted or given by God himself. He had designed a state of perfection unto the church, and seeing the law could not effect it, nay, seeing it could not be introduced whilst the law was in force, unto what end served the giving of this law?

Ans. This doubt was in part solved before, when we showed the ends for which the law was given, although it was weak and unprofitable as unto some other. But yet there are some other reasons to be pleaded, to represent the beauty and order of this dispensation. For,—

1. In all these things the sovereignty of God is to be submitted unto; and, unto humble souls, there is beauty in divine sovereignty. When the Lord Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and thanked his heavenly Father that he had revealed the mysteries of the gospel unto babes, and hid them from the wise and prudent, he assigns no other reason but his sovereignty and pleasure, wherein he rejoiced: "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight," Luke 10:21. And if we

cannot see an excellency in the dispensations of God, because they are his, who gives no account of his matters, we shall never delight in his ways. So our apostle gives no other reason of this legal dispensation, but that "God had provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," Heb. 11:40. Therefore did he give them this law for a season, which made nothing perfect; even so it seemed good in his sight. It is the glory of God to be "gracious to whom he will be gracious," and that at what time he will, and unto what degree and measure he pleaseth. And in this glory of his are we to acquiesce.

2. Mankind having wofully prevaricated and apostatized from God, it was just and equal that they should not be at once re-instated, in their reparation. The suddenness of it might have taken off from its greatness. Wherefore, as God left the generality of the world without the knowledge of what he intended, so he saw good to keep the church in a state of expectancy as to the perfection of liberty and deliverance intended. He could have created the world in an hour, or a moment; but he chose to do it in the space of six days, that the glory of his work might be distinctly represented unto angels and men. And he could immediately after the fall have introduced the promised Seed, in whose advent the church must of necessity enjoy all the perfection whereof it is capable in this world; but to teach the church the greatness of their sin and misery, and to work in them an acknowledgment of his unspeakable grace and mercy, he proceeded gradually in the very revelation of him, as we have showed on chap. 1:1, and caused them to wait, under earnest desires, longings, and expectations, many ages for his coming. And during this season it was of necessity that they should be kept under a law that made nothing perfect. For, as our apostle speaketh, "if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void," Rom. 4:14; and "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. 2:21; and "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. 3:21. Wherefore, until the actual exhibition of the promised Seed, it was absolutely necessary that the church should be kept under a law that made nothing perfect.

3. That people unto whom the law was peculiarly to be given, and by whom God would accomplish his further design, were a stubborn, earthy, hard-hearted people, that stood in need of a yoke to burden and subdue them unto the will of God. So obstinate they were in what they had once received, and so proud of any privilege they enjoyed, that whereas their privileges were very many and very great, they would never have had any thought of looking out

after another state, but have foregone the promise, had they not been pinched, and burdened, and disappointed in their expectation of perfection by this law, and the yoke of it.

4. God had designed that the Lord Christ should in all things have the pre-eminence. This was due unto him, on the account of the glory of his person and the greatness of his work. But if the law could have made any thing perfect, it is evident that this could not have been.

Secondly, Perfection being thus denied unto the law, it is added, Ἐπεισαγωγὴ δὲ κρείττονος ἐλπίδος. The words are elliptical, and without a supplement give no certain sense. And this may be made two ways: First, by the verb substantive ἦν, and so the whole of what is asserted is an effect of the law. "It made nothing perfect," but "it was the bringing in of a better hope," or "an introduction unto a better hope," as some render the words. It served as God's way and method unto the bringing in of our Lord Jesus Christ; unto this end it was variously serviceable in the church. For as its institutions, promises, instructions, and types, did represent him unto the faith of believers; so it prepared their minds unto an expectation of him, and longing after him. And the conjunction δέ, which is adversative, seems to intimate an opposition in what the law did, unto what it is said before that it did not. It "did not make any thing perfect," but it "did bring in a better hope;" and we know in how many things it was a preparatory introduction of the gospel. Wherefore this sense is true, though not, as I judge, directly intended in these words.

Beza first observed that δέ was put for ἀλλά in this place, as it is unquestionably in sundry others. If so, not an assignation of a contrary effect unto the law unto what was before denied is intended, but the designation and expression of another cause of the effecting of that which the law could not effect. And the defective speech is to be supplied by ἐτελείωσε, "made perfect;" as we do it by "did,"—that is, "did make all things perfect." To the same purpose the apostle expresseth himself in other words, Rom. 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." For the words are so to be supplied, 'What the law could not do, that God did;' which what it was, and how God did it, the following words declare. Thus, God had designed to bring the church into a better state, a state of comparative perfection in this world. This the law was not a means or instrument suited unto: wherefore another way is fixed on to that end; which being completely effective of it, the law was laid aside and disannulled, as unprofitable.

Ἐπεισαγωγή. This the word ἐπεισαγωγή doth lead unto: for it is as much as "postintroductio," or "superintroductio;" the introduction of one thing after or upon another. This was the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, which were brought in after the law, upon it, in the room of it, to effect that which the law could not do. This our apostle further argues and confirms, Heb. 10:1–10.

This, therefore, is the sense of the words, 'The introduction of the better hope, after and upon the law, when a sufficient discovery had been made of its weakness and insufficiency as unto this end, did make all things perfect, or bring the church unto that state of consummation which was designed unto it.'

Κρείττονος. Thirdly, It remaineth only, therefore, that we show what this "better hope" is, whereunto this effect is ascribed. Whatever it be, it is called "better" with respect unto the law, with all things that the law contained or could effect,—somewhat of more power and efficacy to perfect the church-state. This neither was nor could be any thing but Christ himself and his priesthood. For "we are complete in him," Col. 2:10; and "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. 10:14; the heavenly things themselves being purified thereby.

Ἐλπίδος. "Hope," therefore, is used here metonymically, to design the thing hoped for. From the giving of the first promise, and throughout under the dispensation of the law, Christ and his coming into the world were the hope of all believers, the great thing which they desired, longed and hoped for. Hence was he called "the Desire of all nations," Hag. 2:7;—that which the secret desires of the whole race of mankind worked towards. And in the church, which enjoyed the promises, they rejoiced in the foresight of it, as did Abraham; and desired to see his day, as did the prophets, diligently inquiring into the time and season of the accomplishment of those revelations which they had received concerning him, 1 Pet. 1:11, 12. It is not, therefore, the doctrine of the gospel, with its precepts and promises, as some suppose, which is here intended, any otherwise but as it is a declaration of the coming of Christ, and the discharge of his office; for without a respect hereunto, without virtue and efficacy thence alone derived, the outward precepts and promises of the gospel would no more perfect the church-state than the law could do.

Obs. VII. When God hath designed any gracious end towards the church, it shall not fail, nor his work cease for want of effectual means to accomplish it.—All means, indeed, have their efficacy from his designation of them unto their end. His wisdom makes them meet, and his power makes them effectual.

Whatever, therefore, seems to be a means in the hand of God unto any end, and doth not effect it, was never designed thereunto; for he fails in none of his ends, nor do his means come short of what he aims at by them. Wherefore, although God designed a perfect state of the church, and after that gave the law, yet he never designed the law to accomplish that end. It had other ends, as we have already declared. But men were very apt to take up with the law, and to say of it, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before us." Wherefore God by many ways and means discovered the weakness of the law, as unto this end. Then were men ready to conclude that the promise itself, concerning this perfect church-state, would be of none effect. The mistake lay only herein, that indeed God had not as yet used that only means for it which his infinite wisdom had suited for, and his infinite power would make effectual unto, its attainment. And this he did in such a way, as that those who would not make use of his means, but would as it were impose that upon him which he never intended to make use of in that kind, perished in their unbelief. Thus was it with the generality of the Jews, who would have perfection by the law, or none at all.

Wherefore the promises of God concerning the church, and to it, must be the rule and measure of our faith. Three things do deeply exercise the church, as unto their accomplishment: 1. Difficulties rendering it wholly improbable. 2. Long and unexpected procrastinations. 3. Disappointment of appearing means of it. But in this instance, of the introduction of a perfect church-state in and by the person of Jesus Christ, God hath provided a security for our faith against all objections which these considerations might suggest. For,—

1. What greater difficulties can possibly lie in the way of the accomplishment of any of the promises of God which yet are upon the sacred record unaccomplished,—as suppose, the calling of the Jews, the destruction of antichrist, the peace of the church, and prosperity of it in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit,—but that as great, and greater, lay in the way of the fulfilling of this promise? All the national provocations, sins, and idolatries, that fell out in the posterity of Abraham; all the calamities and desolating judgments that overtook them; the cutting down of the house of David, until there was only a root of it left in the earth; the unbelief of the whole body of the people; the enmity of the world, acted by all the craft and power of Satan; were as mountains in the way of the accomplishment of this promise: but yet they all of them became at length a plain before the Spirit of God. And if we should compare the difficulties and oppositions that at this day lie against the fulfilling of some divine promises, with those that rose up against this one of perfecting

the church-state in Christ, it would, it may be, abate our forwardness in condemning the Jews for incredulity, unless we found ourselves more established in the faith of what is to come than for the most part we are.

2. Long and unexpected procrastinations are trials of faith also. Now this promise was given at the beginning of the world, nor was there any time allotted for its accomplishment. Hence it is generally supposed, from the words there used in the imposition of the name of Cain on her first-born, that Eve apprehended that the promise was actually fulfilled. The like expectations had the saints of all ages; and they were continually looking out after the rising of this bright morning Star. Many a time did God renew the promise, and sometimes confirmed it with his oath, as unto Abraham and David; and yet still were their expectations frustrated, so far as confined unto their own generations. And though God accepted them in their cries, and prayers, and hopes, and longing desires, yet nearly four thousand years were expired before the promise received its accomplishment. And if we do believe that the faith and grace of the new testament do exceed what was administered under the old, and that we do enjoy that pledge of God's veracity in the accomplishment of his promises which they attained not unto, shall we think it much if we are exercised some part of that season (as yet but a small time) in looking after the accomplishment of other promises?

3. Disappointment of appearing means is of the same nature. Long after the promise was given and renewed, the law is in a solemn and glorious manner delivered unto the church, as the rule of their worship and the means of their acceptance with God. Hence the generality of the people did always suppose that this was it which would make all things perfect. Something, indeed, they thought might be added unto its glory, in the personal coming of the Messiah; but the law was still to be that which was to make all things perfect. And we may easily apprehend what a surprisal it was unto them, when it was made manifest that the law was so far from effecting this promised state, that there was a necessity for taking it out of the way, as a thing "weak and unprofitable," that "the better hope," perfecting the state of the church, might be introduced. Such appearances are sometimes presented unto us of means highly probable for the delivery of the church, which after a while do utterly disappear, and things are rolled into a posture quite contrary unto the expectations of many. When there is an appearance of what God hath promised, of what believers have prayed for, it is no wonder if some do earnestly embrace it. But when God hath laid aside any means, and sufficiently declared that it is not his holy pleasure to

use it in such a way, or unto such a length as we would desire, for the fulfilling of his promises, it is not duty, but obstinacy and selfishness, to adhere unto it with any such expectation.

Obs. VIII. Believers of old, who lived under the law, did not live upon the law, but upon the hope of Christ, or Christ hoped for.—Christ is "the same" (that is, unto the church) "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If justification, if salvation could be had any other way, or by any other means, then was his coming needless, and his death in vain. It was the promise of him, and not of the law which he had broken, which was the relief and salvation of Adam. This being the first thing that was proposed unto fallen man, as the only means of his restoration, justification, and salvation, if any thing were afterwards added unto the same purpose, it would declare this to be insufficient; which would be an impeachment of divine wisdom and grace. On the same promise of Christ, which virtually contained and exhibited unto believers all the benefits of his mediation, as it was frequently renewed and variously explained, did all the saints live under the old testament. And the obscurity of the revelations of him in comparison of that by the gospel, respected only the degrees, but not the essence of their faith.

Obs. IX. The Lord Christ, by his priesthood and sacrifice, makes perfect the church, and all things belonging thereunto, Col. 2:10.

Δι᾽ ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ Θεῷ. FIFTHLY, In the last place, the apostle illustrates the work wrought through the introduction of "the better hope," by the effect of it in them that do believe: Δι᾽ ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ Θεῷ,—"By which we draw nigh unto God." Δι᾽ ἧς, "by which," may refer either to the remote antecedent, ἐπεισαγωγή, "the introduction" or "bringing in;" or unto the next, which is ἐλπίδος, "the hope;" being both of the same gender. "By the introduction of the better hope we draw nigh to God;" or, "By which hope we draw nigh to God." Both come to the same, for the substance of the sense; but the application is more natural to the next antecedent, "By which hope we draw nigh unto God." It remaineth only that we inquire what it is thus to draw nigh to God.

Ἐγγίζω is a word belonging unto the sacerdotal office, denoting the approach of the priests unto God in his worship. So the LXX. for the most part render קָרַב, the general term for all access unto God with sacrifices and offerings. And this doth the apostle intend. Under the Levitical priesthood, the priests in their sacrifices did draw nigh unto God. The same now is done by all believers, under the sacerdotal ministration of Jesus Christ. They now, all them, draw nigh unto

God. And in all their worship, especially in their prayers and supplications, they have by him an access unto God, Eph. 2:18. There is a similitude in these things, and an allusion in the one unto the other; yet so as that the one doth far excel the other, as to grace and privilege. For, 1. Under the law it was the priests alone who had this privilege of drawing nigh unto God, in the solemn worship of the temple and tabernacle. The people were kept at a distance, and might never come near the sacred services of the holy place. But all believers being made a royal priesthood, every one of them hath an equal right and privilege, by Christ, of drawing nigh unto God. 2. The priests themselves did draw nigh only unto outward pledges, tokens, and symbols of God's presence. Their highest attainment was in the entrance of the high priest once a-year into the most holy place. Yet was the presence of God there only in things made with hands, only instituted to represent his glory. But believers do draw nigh to God himself, unto the throne of his grace, as the apostle declares, Heb. 10:19–22.

It may therefore be granted that there is this intention in the words. For as, by the law of old, the priests in the solemn worship of the church did draw nigh to God in those visible pledges of his presence which he had appointed; and this they did by virtue of the Aaronical priesthood and the law of its institution, which was the utmost that could be attained in their imperfect state; so now, upon the introduction of "the better hope," and by virtue thereof, believers in all their solemn worship do draw nigh unto God himself, and find acceptance with him.

And there are two reasons for the admission of this interpretation. For, 1. One part of the apostle's design is to manifest the glory and pre-eminence of gospel-worship above that of the law. And the excellency hereof consists, not in outward forms and pompous ceremonies, but in this, that all believers do therein draw nigh unto God himself with boldness. 2. Whereas it is peculiarly the priesthood of Christ, and his discharge of that office in his oblation and intercession, which he intends by "the better hope," as he fully declares himself towards the end of the chapter, they are those which we have a peculiar respect unto, in all our approaches unto God in our holy worship. Our entrance unto the throne of grace is through the veil of his flesh as offered. Our admission is only by virtue of his oblation, and our acceptance depends on his intercession. Herein, therefore, in a peculiar manner, by this "better hope, we draw nigh unto God."

But yet there is a more extensive signification of this expression in the Scripture, which must not be here excluded. By nature all men are gone far off from God. The first general apostasy carried mankind to a most inconceivable distance from him. Though our distance from him by nature, as we are creatures, be infinite, yet this hinders not but that, in his infinite goodness and condescension, we may have intercourse with him, and find acceptance before him. But the distance which came between us by sin cuts off all communion of that kind. Wherefore our moral distance from God, as our nature is corrupted, is greater, with respect unto our relation unto him, than our essential distance from him, as our nature is created. Hence, being "far off" is the expression of this state of nature: Eph. 2:13, "Ye were sometimes far off." And whatever accompanieth that state, in wrath and curse upon men; in fear, bondage, and power of sin, and enmity against God within them; in obnoxiousness unto misery in this world, and to eternal destruction hereafter, is comprised in that expression. It is to be far from the love and favour of God, from the knowledge of him, and obedience unto him. Wherefore, our drawing nigh unto God denotes our delivery and recovery from this estate. So it is expressed in the place above named: "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." To represent this, all the acts of solemn worship, which respected the sacrifice of Christ, were called "approximations."

And hereunto, unto this drawing nigh to God, or that we may so do, two things are required: 1. A removal of whatever kept us at a distance from God. And the things of this nature were of two sorts: (1.) What was upon us from God, for our sin and apostasy. This was his wrath and curse; and these were declared in the publishing of the law on mount Sinai, with the terrible appearances and dreadful voices that accompanied it. This made the people "stand afar off," Exod. 20:21; as an emblem of their condition with respect unto the law. (2.) Guilt within, with its consequences of fear, shame, and alienation from the life of God. Unless these things, of the one sort and the other, those upon us and those within us, be taken away and removed, we can never draw nigh unto God. And to secure our distance, they were enrolled in a hand-writing, as a record against us, that we should never, on our own account, so much as endeavour any access unto him, Eph. 2:14, Col. 2:14. How they were removed by "the bringing in of the better hope," that is, by the priesthood of Christ, the apostle declares in this epistle, as we shall see, God willing, in our progress. This neither was nor could be done by the law or its ordinances; neither the moral preceptive part of it nor the ceremonial, in all its rites and

sacrifices, could of itself expiate sins, make atonement for our apostasy, turn away the wrath of God, or take away guilt, fear, bondage, and alienation, out of the minds of men.

2. There is moreover required hereunto, that, upon the justification and acceptation of our persons, we have faith, liberty, boldness, confidence and assurance, given unto us, in our coming unto God. And this cannot be without the renovation of our natures into his image, the quickening of our souls with a new principle of spiritual life, and ability unto all duties of acceptable obedience. All these things are required unto our drawing nigh unto God, or unto a state of reconciliation, peace, and communion with him. And we may observe,—

Obs. X. Out of Christ, or without him, all mankind are at an inconceivable distance from God.—And a distance it is of the worst kind; even that which is an effect of mutual enmity. The cause of it was on our part voluntary; and the effect of it, the height of misery. And however any may flatter and deceive themselves, it is the present condition of all who have not an interest in Christ by faith. They are far off from God, as he is the fountain of all goodness and blessedness, "inhabiting," as the prophet speaks, "the parched places of the wilderness, and shall not see when good cometh," Jer. 17:6; far from the dews and showers of grace or mercy; far from divine love and favour,—cast out of the bounds of them, as Adam out of paradise, without any hope or power in themselves to return. The flaming sword of the law turns every way, to keep them from the tree of life. Yet are they not so far from God but that they are under his wrath and curse, and whatever of misery is contained in them. Let them flee whither they please; wish for mountains and rocks to fall on them, as they will do hereafter; hide themselves in the darkness and shades of their own ignorance, like Adam among the trees of the garden; or immerge themselves in the pleasures of sin for a season;—all is one, "the wrath of God abideth on them." And they are far from God in their own minds also; being alienated from him, enemies against him, and in all things made up with Satan, the head of the apostasy. Thus is it, and inconceivably worse, with all that embrace not this "better hope," to bring them nigh unto God.

Obs. XI. It is an effect of infinite condescension and grace, that God would appoint a way of recovery for those who had wilfully cast themselves unto this woful distance from him.—Why should God look after such fugitives any more? He had no need of us or our services in our best condition, much less in that useless, depraved state whereinto we had brought ourselves. And although

we had transgressed the rule of our moral dependence on him in the way of obedience, and thereby done what we could to stain and eclipse his glory, yet he knew how to repair it unto advantage, by reducing us under the order of punishment. By our sins we ourselves "come short of the glory of God;" but he could lose none by us, whilst it was absolutely secured by the penalty annexed unto the law. When, upon the entrance of sin, he came and found Adam in the bushes, wherein he thought foolishly to hide himself, who could expect (Adam did not) but that his only design was to apprehend the poor rebellious fugitive, and give him up to condign punishment? But quite otherwise, above all thoughts that could ever have entered into the hearts of angels or men. After he had declared the nature of the apostasy, and his own indignation against it, he proposeth and promiseth a way of deliverance and recovery! This is that which the Scripture so magnifies, under the names of "grace," and "love of God," which are beyond expression or conception, John 3:16. And it hath also this lustre frequently put upon it, that he dealt not so with the angels that sinned; which manifests what condition he might have left us in also, and how infinitely free and sovereign that grace was from whence it was otherwise. Thence it was that he had a "desire again unto the works of his hands," to bring poor mankind near unto him. And whereas he might have recalled us unto himself, yet, so as to leave some mark of his displeasure upon us, kept us at a greater distance from him than that we stood at before,—as David brought back his wicked Absalom to Jerusalem, but would not suffer him to come into his presence,—he chose to act like himself, in infinite wisdom and grace, to bring us yet nearer unto him than ever we could have approached by the law of our creation. And as the foundation, means, and pledge hereof, he contrived and brought forth that most glorious and unparalleled effect of divine wisdom, in taking our nature into that inconceivable nearness unto himself, in the union of it unto the person of his Son. For as all things, in this bringing of us nigh to God who were afar off, are expressive effects of wisdom and grace; so that of taking our nature into union with himself is glorious unto astonishment. And as we are thereby made inconceivably more nigh to God in our nature than we were upon our first creation, or than angels shall ever be; so by virtue thereof are we in our persons brought in many things much nearer to God than ever we could have been brought by the law of creation. "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" Ps. 8:1. It is in

the admiration of this unspeakable grace that the psalmist is so ravished in the contemplation of God, as hath been declared in our exposition on the second chapter of this epistle.

Obs. XII. All our approximation unto God in any kind, all our approaches unto him in holy worship, is by Him alone who was the blessed hope of the saints under the old testament, and is the life of them under the new.—These things must be afterwards spoken unto.

Hebrews 7: 20–22

The apostle had warned the Hebrews before, that he had "many things to say," and those "not easy to be understood," concerning Melchisedec. And herein he intended not only those things which he expresseth directly concerning that person and his office, but the things themselves signified thereby in the person and office of Christ. And therefore he omits nothing which may from thence be any way represented. So from that one testimony of the psalmist he makes sundry inferences unto his purpose; as,—1. That the Lord Christ was to be a priest; which included in it the cessation of the Levitical priesthood, seeing he was of the tribe of Judah, and not of the tribe of Levi. 2. That he was to be another priest; that is, a priest of another order, namely, that of Melchisedec. And this he variously demonstrates, to prove his pre-eminence above the Aaronical priesthood as also thereon, that upon his introduction that order was utterly to cease and be disannulled. 3. He observes from the same testimony, unto the same purpose, that he was to be a priest for ever, so as that there should never more, upon his death or otherwise, be any need of another priest, nor any possibility of the return of the former priesthood into the church. 4. Neither yet doth he rest here, but observes moreover the manner how God, in the testimony insisted on, declared his purpose of making the Lord Christ a priest, which was constitutive of his office; and that was by his oath: and thence he takes occasion to manifest how far his priesthood is exalted above that under the law. This is that which now lies before us in these verses. And we have in these things an instance given of what unsearchable stores of wisdom and truth are laid up in every parcel of the word of God, if we have a spiritual light in their investigation.

Ver. 20–22.—Καὶ καθ᾽ ὅσον οὐ χωρὶς ὁρκωμοσίας (οἱ μὲν γὰρ χωρὶς ὁρκωμοσίας εἰσὶν ἱερεῖς γεγονότες, ὁ δὲ μετὰ ὁρκωμοσίας διὰ τοῦ λέγοντος πρὸς αὐτόν· Ὤμοσε Κύριος, καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται· Σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ), κατὰ τοσοῦτον κρείττονος διαθήκης γέγονεν ἔγγυος Ἰησοῦς.

The words of the 20th verse being elliptical, the sense of them is variously supplied. Most translators carry on the sense unto that which is the midst of the 21st in our translation, "others were made priests without an oath." The Syriac refers the words unto them foregoing, וְשַׁרְרַהּ לַן בְּמַוְמָתָא, "and confirmed it" (that is, "the better hope") "with an oath;" and Beza, "etiam quatenus non sine jurejurando superintroducta est, "inasmuch as [that hope] is not brought in without an oath;" and another since, "et eò potior illa spes, quatenùs non absque jurejurando superintroducta est," Schmid. But this limits the comparison unto this verse, which the apostle really finisheth verse 22. Vulg. Lat., "et quantum est non sine jurejurando;" which the Rhemists render, "and inasmuch as it is not without an oath." Ours supply, "he was made a priest,"—"inasmuch as not without an oath he was made a priest:" no doubt according to the mind of the apostle; for he hath a prospect in these words unto what ensues, where he expressly applies this oath unto the priesthood of Christ, and the consummation thereof.

Καὶ καθ᾽ ὅσον, "etiam quatenus," "et quatenus;" "and inasmuch." Καθ᾽ ὅσον is omitted by the Syriac. Vulg., "in quantum est," "inasmuch." Hereunto answereth κατὰ τοσοῦτον, verse 22, "eatenus."

Ορκωμοσία is the same with ὅρκος, "jusjurandum;" an "oath." But it is here principally applied unto those oaths whereby conventions, compacts, or covenants, were confirmed. Hence ὁρκωμόσια were the "sacrifices" that were offered in the confirmation of sworn covenants. It is three times used here by our apostle on this occasion, verses 20, 21, 28, and nowhere else in the New Testament.

Οἱ μὲν γάρ. Vulg., "alii quidem;" which the Rhemists mend by rendering it, "and the other." Beza, "nam illi quidem." And so the Syriac, הָנוּן גֵּיר, "and they." Ours, "for those priests;" rather, "and truly those priests," though μὲν γάρ have only the force of a causal conjunction.

Εἰσὶ γεγονότες. Syr., הָווּ, "were." But the manner of their being made priests is intended, and so the words are to be expressed fully; "facti sunt," "were made."

Διὰ τοῦ λέγοντος πρὸς αὐτόν. The Syriac adds, בְּיַד דַּוִיד, "by the hand of David." It is not the giving of the oath, but the recording of it in the psalm, that he intendeth.

Οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται, "non pœnitebit." Syr., וְלָא נְדַגֵּל, "and will not lie;" "will not repent," or change his mind.

Κατὰ τοσοῦτον. Vulg., "in tantum;" to answer "in quantum" before. "Tanto," "eatenùs;" "tanto," "by so much." Syr., הָנָא כֻּלֹּה, "hoc toto," "by all this;" and so proceeds, "this covenant was more excellent wherein Jesus was made the surety."

Of the signification of the word ἔγγυος I shall speak afterwards.

Ver. 20–22.—And inasmuch as not without an oath: (for they truly were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that paid unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) by so much was Jesus made surety of a better covenant.

The same argument is pursued as in the foregoing verses, only with a new medium, and that such as leads on towards the conclusion of the whole disputation. The introduction of a new priesthood, the cessation or abolition of the old, with the advantage of the church thereby, because of its dignity, pre-eminence, and stability, above that which was to give place unto it, are the things which the apostle is in the proof and confirmation of.

There are three things in these three verses: 1. A proposition of a new medium for the confirmation of the principal argument before insisted on, verse 20. 2. An illustration and proof of what is asserted in that proposition, verse 21. 3. An inference from its being so established and proved, verse 22.

In the proposition three things may be considered:—1. The connection of it unto the preceding discourse, by the conjunction καί. 2. The modification of the proposition, in the manner of its introduction; καθ᾽ ὅσον, "quanto," "quatenus," "in quantum;" "inasmuch." 3. The proposition itself, expressed negatively: Οὐ χωρίς, "Not without," etc.

Καί. 1. The note of connection, καί, may respect verse 17, where the same testimony now insisted upon is introduced, and so may intimate a further pursuit of the same argument. If so, the other two verses, 18, 19, are inserted as a parenthesis, comprising an inference of what the apostle had before proved, with the reason of it: for whereas before he had only made use of the words of the Father unto Christ, "Thou art a priest for ever," and thereon showed what would thence follow; he now proceeds to declare the manner how those words were spoken, namely, "with an oath." Or it may respect the words immediately foregoing, namely, "the bringing in of a better hope;" for it was brought in "by an oath:" and this sense is followed by most translators, who supply the defect in these words by the repetition of "a better hope." But although neither of these suppositions concerning the connection of the words doth prejudice the sense or design of them, yet, as we have observed before, καί oftentimes is as much as

"moreover," as it is rendered, "etiam," by Beza; and then it denotes not an immediate connection with, or dependence on what went before in particular, but only a process in the same general argument. And so it is here a note of introduction of a new, special consideration, for the confirmation of the same design. Hence our translators supply the words, not with any thing that went before, but with what follows after, which the apostle designed now in particular to speak unto,—"he was made a priest."

Καθj ὅσον. 2. The modification of the proposition is in these words, Καθj ὅσον, "eatenus quantum," "in quantum;" "inasmuch," "so much." Hereunto answers κατὰ τοσοῦτον, verse 22, "in tantum," "quanto," "tanto." The excellency of the covenant whereof Christ was made mediator above the old covenant, had proportion with the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, in that he was made a priest by an oath, but they were not so. And we may observe in general, that,—

Obs. I. The faith, comfort, honour, and safety of the church, depend much on every particular mark that God hath put upon any of the offices of Christ, or whatever belongs thereunto.

We have lived to see men endeavouring their utmost to render Christ himself, and all his offices, of as little use in religion as they can possibly admit, and yet retain the name of Christians. And it is to be feared that he is as little valued by some in their practice as he is by others in their notions. This is not the way of the Scripture. Therein every concernment of him and his offices is particularly insisted on; and the apostle in this chapter makes it manifest what important mysteries depend on such minute considerations as some would think were little to be regarded. But all things concerning him are full of divine mysteries; and every word about them that drops from infinite wisdom ought to be an object of faith and admiration. When, therefore, we cease to inquire with all diligence into all the revelations made concerning Christ or his offices, or any thing which belongs unto them, we do really cease to be Christians. And there can be no greater evidence of our want of faith in him and love unto him, than if we neglect a due consideration of all things that the Scripture reveals and testifies concerning him.

Οὐ χωρὶς ὁρκωμοσίας. 3. The proposition itself is in these words: "Not without an oath." Two things the apostle supposeth in this negative proposition: (1.) That there were two ways whereby men either were or might be made priests; namely, they might be so either with or without an oath. And he expresseth the

latter way, applying it negatively unto Christ, that he might include a negation of the former way with respect unto the priests under the law; both which he afterwards expressly mentioneth. (2.) That the dignity of the priesthood depends on, and is declared by the way whereby God was pleased to initiate men into that office. These two things being in general laid down, as those which could not be denied, the apostle makes application of them in the next verse distinctly, unto the priests of the law on the one hand, and Christ on the other, in a comparison between whom he is engaged. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. II. Nothing was wanting on the part of God that might give eminency, stability, glory, and efficacy, unto the priesthood of Christ: "Not without an oath." For,—

1. This was due unto the glory of his person. The Son of God in infinite grace condescending unto the susception of this office, and the discharge of all the duties of it, it was meet that all things which might contribute any thing unto the glory or efficacy of it should accompany his undertakings. For being in himself "the image of the invisible God, by whom all things were created," it was meet that in his whole work he should "in all things have the pre-eminence," as our apostle speaks, Col. 1:15, 16, 18. He was, in every thing that he undertook, to be preferred and exalted above all others, who ever were employed in the church, or ever should be; and therefore was he made a priest "not without an oath."

2. God saw that this was needful, to encourage and secure the faith of the church. There were many things defective in the priesthood under the law, as we have partly seen already, and shall yet see more fully in our progress. And it suited the design and wisdom of God that it should be so; for he never intended that the faith of the church should rest and be terminated in those priests or their office. What he granted unto them was sufficient unto the end and use whereunto he had designed it; so as that the church might have all that respect for it which was needful or for their good. But so many defects there were in that administration, as might sufficiently evidence that the faith of the church was not to acquiesce therein, but to look for what was yet to come, as our apostle proves by many instances in this chapter. But upon the introduction of the priesthood of Christ, God really and actually proposeth and exhibiteth unto the church all that they were to trust unto, all that he would do, or was any way needful to be done, for their peace and salvation. No other relief was to be expected for the future; therefore did God, in infinite wisdom and grace, for the stability and security of their faith, grant the highest and most peculiar

evidences of the everlasting confirmation of his priesthood. And hereby did he manifest that this dispensation of his will and grace was absolutely unchangeable; so that if we comply not therewithal we must perish for ever. Thus all the whole Scripture, and all contained therein, direct us unto our ultimate hope and rest in Christ alone.

Οἱ μὲν γάρ. Ver. 21.—In the application of this assertion, the apostle affirms that "those priests," the priests under the law, "were made without an oath." No such thing is mentioned in all that is recorded concerning their call and consecration; for where they are expressly declared in their outward circumstances, Exod. 28, 29, there is mention made of no such thing. But their dedication consisted in three things:—

Εἰσὶν ἱερεῖς γεγονότες. 1. A call from God, expressed chap. 28:1. We have showed how necessary this was unto the first erection of any priesthood, though it was to be continued by an ordinary succession. See chap. 5:4. It is therefore granted, that in this general foundation of the office, Aaron had it, even as Christ had, though not in the same way or manner; for the call of Christ was far more eminent and glorious than that of Aaron, as hath been showed.

2. It consisted in the appointment and preparation of those peculiar garments and mystical ornaments wherein they were to administer their office; and their unction with the holy anointing oil, when clothed with those garments.

3. In the sacrifices wherewith they were consecrated and actually set apart unto that office whereunto they were called.

And these two were peculiar unto them, there being no use of them in the consecration of Christ: for both of them did declare their whole administration to be external and carnal, and therefore could never make any thing perfect; nor were capable of a confirmation unto perpetuity.

But the promise made unto Phinehas seems to be expressed for an eternity in this priesthood. "Behold," saith God, "I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood," Num. 25:12, 13. But this proves not a certain absolute perpetuity of this priesthood of Phinehas. For,—

1. The covenant intended was not a complete, solemn covenant, confirmed either by oath or sacrifice, but only a naked promise or declaration of the will of God. And that בְּרִית is frequently used for such a promise as wherein the nature of a covenant is not contained, is acknowledged by the Jews themselves.

2. All the special covenants or promises that God made unto or with any under the law, that had respect unto legal administrations, were all of them commensurate unto the duration and continuance of the law itself. Whilst the covenant of the law itself was in force, they also continued; and when that ceased, then also were they to cease; for, the foundation being taken away, the whole building must come to the ground. Now, that this old covenant of the law was to cease, and be taken away by the introduction of another and a better, God did openly and frequently declare under the old testament, as our apostle manifests by one signal instance in the next chapter. And this is the sense of לְעוֹלָם, "for ever," in this case constantly. It expresseth a certain continuance of any thing, so as not to be changed, or to have another thing substituted in the room of that whereunto it is applied, whilst that legal dispensation continued. And so it was in this promise made unto Phinehas. For although there was an intercision made afterwards, as to the continuance of the priesthood in the line of his family, by the interposition of Eli and his sons, who were of the posterity of Ithamar, yet he returned again unto the enjoyment of this promise, in the person of Zadok, in the days of Solomon, and so continued until the second temple was forsaken of God also, and made "a den of thieves."

But neither with respect unto him or any other is there any mention of the oath of God; for indeed God did never solemnly interpose himself with an oath, in a way of privilege or mercy, but with direct respect unto Jesus Christ. So he "sware by himself" unto Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; whereby he declared the immutability of his counsel, in sending his Son to take his seed upon him. So he "sware unto David by his holiness," that his seed, namely Christ, should sit on the throne for ever. Wherefore, although God never changeth any real internal acts of his will, or his purposes,—for "with him there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning,"—yet he often works an alteration in some things, which on some conditions, or for some time, he hath proposed and enjoined unto his church, unless they were confirmed by his oath; for this declares them to be absolutely immutable.

Καὶ οἱ μὲν χωρὶς ὁρκωμοσιας. This is the account the apostle gives of the Aaronical priests, Καὶ οἱ μέν, "And they truly,"—that is, Aaron, and all his posterity that exercised the priest's office in a due manner,—"they were all made priests;" that is, by God himself. They did not originally "take this honour unto themselves," but "were called of God." For he hath no regard unto them who in those days invaded the priest's office with violence, deceit, or bribery; and so not

only corrupting but evacuating the covenant of Levi. Those that entered into and executed their office according to the law are here intended by him. These were all made priests in the way of God's appointment; but neither all of them nor any of them were made priests by an oath. God, into whose sovereign will and pleasure all these things are resolved, granted unto them what he saw convenient, and withheld what seemed good unto him. What he did, was sufficient to oblige the people unto obedience during that dispensation of his will; and what he did not add, but reserved for a further dispensation of his grace, intimated that liberty which he reserved unto himself of making an alteration therein, as he saw good. And we may see that,—

Obs. III. Although the decrees and purposes of God were always firm and immutable, yet there was no fixed state of outward dispensations, none confirmed with an oath, until Christ came.—Nor shall we find any rest in any thing, until we come to Christ.

Ο δέ. The apostle in the next words declares in particular and positively what he had in general and negatively before laid down: "But this with an oath;" ὁ δέ, "but he," "this man," he who was to be "a priest after the order of Melchisedec." Μεθ᾽ ὁρκωμοσίας. He was made μεθ᾽ ὁρκωμοσίας,—"with an oath." This is first asserted, and then proved by the testimony of the psalmist. And the assertion may have a double signification: 1. That this oath was constituent of his office. Therein his call and consecration did consist. 2. That his call, constitution, or consecration, was confirmed and ratified with an oath. And the latter sense is intended; for so doth the antithesis require. 'Those legal priests had a divine constitution and call; but they had no confirmation by the addition of an oath; —God used not an oath in or about any thing that belonged unto them. Wherefore this man was also to have another call unto and constitution of his office; but he was to be confirmed therein by an oath.' Wherein this call of Christ unto his office did consist, what were the acts of the divine will thereabout, and what was the manifestation of them, I have declared at large in the exercitations about the priesthood of Christ. Two things are to be considered in this oath: Ὤμοσε Κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται. 1. The form; and, 2. The matter of it. The form of it is in these words, "The Lord sware, and will not repent." And the matter of it is, that he in his own person should be "a priest for ever."

1. The person swearing is God the Father, who speaks unto the Son in Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord." And the oath of God is nothing but the solemn, eternal, and unchangeable decree and purpose of his will, under an

especial way of declaration. So the same act and counsel of God's will is called his "decree," Ps. 2:7. Wherefore, when God will so far unveil a decree and purpose as to testify it to be absolute and unchangeable, he doth it in the way of an oath; as hath been declared, chap. 6:13, 14. Or, to the same purpose, God affirms that he hath sworn in the case.

If, then, it be demanded, when God thus sware unto Christ, I answer, We must consider the decree itself unto this purpose, and the peculiar revelation or declaration of it; in which two this oath doth consist. And as to the first, it belongs entirely unto those eternal federal transactions between the Father and the Son, which were the original of the priesthood of Christ, which I have at large explained in our exercitations. And as for the latter, it was when he gave out that revelation of his mind in the force and efficacy of an oath, in the psalm by David.

It is, therefore, not only a mistake, but an error of danger in some expositors, who suppose that this oath was made unto Christ upon his ascension into heaven. For this apprehension being pursued, will fall in with the πρῶτον ψεῦδος of the Socinians in this whole cause, namely, that the kingly and priestly offices of Christ are not really distinct. Moreover, it supposeth the principal discharge of the priesthood of Christ, in his sacrifice, to have been antecedent unto this oath; which utterly enervates the apostle's argument in these words. For if he were made a priest and discharged his office without an oath, as he must be and do on this supposition, that the oath of God was made unto him after his ascension (or that his death and oblation therein belonged not unto his priestly office), he had no pre-eminence herein unto the Aaronical priests. He might so have a subsequent privilege of the confirmation of his office, but he had none in his call thereunto.

Wherefore this oath of God, though not in itself solely the constituent cause of the priesthood of Christ, yet it was, and it was necessarily to be, antecedent unto his actual entrance upon or discharge of any solemn duty of his office.

Οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται. That additional expression, "And he will not repent," declares the nature of the oath of God and of the purpose confirmed thereby. When God makes an alteration in any law, rule, order, or constitution, he is or may be said, ἀνθρωποπαθῶς, to repent. This God by this word declares shall never be; no alteration or change, no removal or substitution, shall ever be made in this matter.

Σὺ ἱερεύς. 2. The matter of this oath is, that Christ is and should be "a priest for ever." He was not only made a priest with an oath, which they were not, but a priest for ever. This adds unto the unchangeableness of his office, that he himself in his own person was to bear, exercise, and discharge it, without substitute or successor.

Εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. And this "for ever" answers unto the "for ever" under the law, each of them being commensurate unto the dispensation of that covenant which they do respect; for absolute eternity belongs not unto these things. The "for ever" of the old testament was the duration of the dispensation of the old covenant. And this "for ever" respects the new covenant, which is to continue unto the consummation of all things, no change therein being any way intimated or promised, or consistent with the wisdom and faithfulness of God; all which were otherwise under the law. But at the end of the world, together with the dispensation of the new covenant, an end will be put unto all the mediatory offices of Christ, and all their exercise. And there are four things which the apostle declareth and evinceth in this observation:—

1. That our high priest was peculiarly designed unto and initiated into his office, by the oath of God, which none other ever was before him.

2. That the person of the high priest is hereby so absolutely determined, as that the church may continually draw nigh unto God in the full assurance of faith.

3. That this priesthood is liable to no alteration, succession, or substitution.

4. That from hence ariseth the principal advantage of the new testament above the old, as is declared in the next verse; and we may observe,—

Obs. IV. That although God granted great privileges unto the church under the old testament, yet still in every instance he withheld that which was the principal, and should have given perfection unto what he did grant. He made them priests, but without an oath.—In all things there was a reserve for Christ, that he in all might have the pre-eminence.

Obs. V. God by his oath declares the determination of his sovereign pleasure unto the object of it.—What he proposeth and prescribeth unto us, he declares no more of his mind and his will about but that he requireth and approveth of our obedience unto it; but still reserves the liberty unto himself of making those alterations in it and about it that seem good unto him. Nothing, therefore, in the whole legal administration being confirmed by the oath of God, it was always ready for removal at the appointed season.

Obs. VI. Christ's being made a priest for ever by the oath of God, is a solid foundation of peace and consolation to the church. For,—

Obs. VII. All the transactions between the Father and the Son, concerning his offices, undertakings, and the work of our redemption, have respect unto the faith of the church, and are declared for our consolation.—Such were his solemn call to his sacerdotal office, and the oath of God whereby he was confirmed therein. I will not say that these things were needless on the part of Christ himself, seeing it became the glory of his person to be thus testified unto in his condescension unto office; yet was it in all these things the good and benefit of the church that was designed. What the Lord Christ said of his prayer unto God the Father, at least so far as it was vocal,—that it was not needful for him, but was only for the confirmation of the faith of others, John 11:41, 42,—may be spoken of all other transactions between God and him; the faith of others was principally respected in them, and thereunto they were absolutely needful. For,—

1. The things which God proposeth unto our faith through Christ are exceeding great and glorious, and such as, being most remote from our innate apprehensions, do need the highest confirmation. Things they are which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man," 1 Cor. 2:9. Things unexpected, great and glorious, are apt to surprise, amaze, and overwhelm our spirits, until they are uncontrollably testified unto. So when Jacob's sons told their father that Joseph was alive, and made governor over all the land of Egypt, Gen. 45:26, the tidings were too great and good for him to receive. But it is added, that when they gave evidence unto their report by the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, "the spirit of Jacob revived," verses 27, 28. The things of the gospel, pardon of sin, peace with God, participation of the Spirit, grace and glory, are great and marvellous. Men at the hearing of them are like them that dream; the words concerning them seem like the report of the women unto the apostles concerning the resurrection of Christ,—"they seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not," Luke 24:11. Wherefore God discovers the fountains of these things, that we may apprehend the truth and reality of them. His eternal covenant with his Son about them, his oath that he hath made unto him, whereby he was established in his office, and the like glorious transactions of his wisdom and grace, are revealed unto this very end, that we might not be faithless in these things, but believe. For can any thing that is proposed unto us be supposed to exceed the duty of faith, when we see it, either in itself or in its springs and foundation, solemnly confirmed by the oath

of God? They are glorious things which we are to expect from the priesthood of Christ, and the discharge of that office. And is it not an unspeakable encouragement thereunto, that God hath confirmed him in that office by his solemn oath unto him? For two things evidently present themselves unto our minds thereon: (1.) That this is a thing which the infinitely holy, wise God lays great weight and stress upon. And what is he not able to effect when he doth so, and consequently lays out the treasures of his wisdom and engageth the greatness of his power in the pursuit of it? And, (2.) His counsel herein is absolutely immutable, and such as on no emergency can admit of alteration. If, therefore, the engagement of infinite wisdom, grace, and power, will not excite and encourage us unto believing, there is no remedy, but we must perish in our sins.

2. As the things proposed in the gospel, as effects of the priesthood of Christ, are in themselves great and glorious, requiring an eminent confirmation, so the frame of our hearts with respect unto them is such, from first to last, as stands in need of all the evidence that can be given unto them. For there is in us by nature an aversation unto them, and a dislike of them. In the wisdom of our carnal minds, we look on them as foolish and useless. And when this woful enmity is conquered by the mighty power of God, and the souls of sinners wrought over to approve of these effects of divine wisdom and grace, yet no man can recount how many doubts, fears, jealous suspicions, we are, as to our closing with them by faith, obnoxious unto. Every one's own heart, if he have any acquaintance with it, if he be diligent in the examination of it, will sufficiently satisfy him what objections faith in this matter hath to conflict withal. And it is to be feared that he who is insensible of the oppositions that arise against sincere believing, never yet knew what it is so to believe. To encourage and strengthen our hearts against them, to give power unto faith against all oppositions, doth God thus reveal the wisdom of his counsel and the glorious springs of this ministration whereinto our whole faith is principally resolved. And indeed we may try the sincerity of our faith by its respect unto these things. It may be some, for aught I know, may be carried on in such an easy course, and be so preserved from perplexing temptations, as not to be driven to seek their relief so deep as these springs of God's confirmation of the office of Christ by his oath do lie; but yet he that doth not of his own choice refresh his faith with the consideration of them, and strengthen it with pleas in his supplications taken from thence, seems to me to be greatly unacquainted with what it is truly to believe.

Ver. 22.—"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."

Κατὰ τοσοῦτον, "by so much," answers directly to καθj ὅσον, verse 20, "inasmuch." There is therefore an immediate connection of these words unto that verse. Hence verse 21, wherein a confirmation is interserted of the principal assertion, is justly placed in a parenthesis in our translation. So the sense of the words is to this purpose: 'And inasmuch as he was not made a priest without an oath, he is by so much made the surety of a better testament.'

And there may be a twofold design in the words: 1. That his being made a priest by an oath made him meet to be the surety of a better testament; or, 2. That the testament whereof he was the surety must needs be better than the other, because he who was the surety of it was made a priest by an oath. In the one way, he proves the dignity of the priesthood of Christ from the new testament; and in the other, the dignity of the new testament from the priesthood of Christ. And we may reconcile both these senses by affirming, that really and efficiently the priesthood gives dignity unto the new testament, and declaratively the new testament sets forth the dignity of the priesthood of Christ.

Κατὰ τοσοῦτον. It is owned tacitly, that the priesthood of Levi, and the old testament, were good, or these could not be said to be "better," in way of comparison. And good they were, because appointed of God, and of singular use unto the church during their continuance. But this priesthood and testament are better, by so much as that which is confirmed with an oath is better than that which is not so; which alone gives the proportion of comparison in this place. Many other advantages there were of the priesthood of Christ and of the new testament, in comparison unto those of the old, all which increase the proportion of difference; but at present the apostle considers only what depends on the oath of God. Wherefore the design of the comparison contained in these words, κατὰ τοσοῦτον, is, that whereas this priest after the order of Melchisedec was designed to be the surety of another testament, he was confirmed in his office by the oath of God; which gives a pre-eminence both unto his office and the testament whereof he was to be a surety.

In the assertion itself, that "Jesus was made a surety of a better testament," we may consider, 1. What is included or supposed in it; and, 2. What is literally expressed.

First, Three things are included and supposed in this assertion: 1. That there was another testament that God had made with his people. 2. That this was a good testament. 3. That this testament had in some sense a surety.

Secondly, As unto what is expressed in these words, there are four things in them: 1. The name of him who was the subject discoursed of; it is "Jesus." 2. What is affirmed of him; he was "a surety." 3. How he became so; he was "made" so. 4. Whereof he was a surety; and that is of a "testament" of God: which 5. is described by its respect unto the other before mentioned, and its preference above it; it is a "better testament."

First, It is supposed, 1. That there was another testament which God had made with his people. This the apostle supposeth in this whole context, and at length brings his discourse unto its head and issue in the eighth chapter, where he expressly compareth the two testaments the one with the other. Now this was the covenant or testament that God made with the Hebrews on Mount Sinai, when he brought them out of Egypt, as is expressly declared in the ensuing chapter, whereof we must treat in its proper place.

2. It is supposed that this was a good testament. It was so in itself, as an effect of the wisdom and righteousness of God; for all that he doth is good in itself, both naturally and morally, nor can it otherwise be. And it was of good use unto the church; namely, unto them who looked unto the end of it, and used it in its proper design. Unto the body of the people, indeed, as far as they were carnal, and looked only on the one hand for temporal benefits by it, or on the other for life and salvation, it was a heavy yoke, yea, the "ministration of death." With respect unto such persons and ends, it contained "statutes that were not good," "commandments that could not give life;" and it was every way unprofitable. But yet in itself it was on many accounts "holy, just, and good:" (1.) As it had an impression upon it of the wisdom and goodness of God. (2.) As it was instructive in the nature and demerit of sin. (3.) As it directed unto and represented the only means of deliverance, by righteousness and salvation in Christ. (4.) As it established a worship which was very glorious and acceptable unto God during its season. But, as we shall show afterwards, it came short in all its excellencies and worth of this whereof Christ is the surety.

3. It is supposed that this testament had a surety; for this new testament having a surety, the other must have so also. But who this was must be inquired into.

(1.) Some would have our Lord Jesus Christ to be the surety of that testament also; for so our apostle affirms in general, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time," 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. Be the covenant or testament what or which it will, there is but "one mediator between God and men." Hence our apostle says of him, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. 13:8. If, therefore, he be the only mediator to-day under the new testament, he was so also yesterday under the old.

Ans. [1.] There is some difference between a mediator at large, and such a mediator as is withal a surety. And however, on any account, Christ may be said to be the mediator of that covenant, he cannot be said to be the surety of it.

[2.] The place in Timothy cannot intend the old covenant, but is exclusive of it; for the Lord Christ is there called a mediator with respect unto the ransom that he paid in his death and blood-shedding. This respected not the confirmation of the old covenant, but was the abolition of it: and the old was confirmed with the blood of beasts, as the apostle expressly declares, Heb. 9:18, 19.

[3.] The Lord Christ was indeed, in his divine person, the immediate administrator of that covenant, the angel and messenger of it on the behalf of God the Father: but this doth not constitute him a mediator properly; for "a mediator is not of one, but God is one."

[4.] The Lord Christ was a mediator under that covenant, as to the original promise of grace, and the efficacy of it, which were administered therein: but he was not the mediator and surety of it as it was a covenant; for had he been so, he being "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," that covenant could never have been disannulled.

(2.) Some assert Moses to have been the surety of the old testament; for so it is said that "the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Gal. 3:19, —that is, of Moses, whom the people desired to be the internuncius between God and them, Exod. 20:19; Deut. 5:27, 18:16.

Ans. [1.] Moses may be said to be the mediator of the old covenant in a general sense, inasmuch as he went between God and the people, to declare the will of God unto them, and to return the profession of obedience from them unto God; but he was in no sense the surety thereof. For, on the one side, God did not appoint him in his stead to give assurance of his fidelity unto the people. This he took absolutely unto himself, in those words wherewith all his laws

were prefaced, "I am the LORD thy God." Nor did he, nor could he, on the other side, undertake unto God for the people; and so could not be esteemed in any sense the surety of the covenant. [2.] The apostle hath no such argument in hand as to compare Christ with Moses, nor is he treating of that office wherein he compares him with him, and prefers him above him; which was his prophetical office, whereof he had before discoursed, chap. 3:4–6. Wherefore,—

(3.) It was the high priest alone who was the surety of that covenant. It was made and confirmed by sacrifices, Ps. 50:5; as we shall see more at large afterwards, chap. 9:19, 20. And if Moses were concerned herein, it was as he executed the office of the priest in an extraordinary manner. Therefore the high priest, offering solemn sacrifices in the name and on the behalf of the people, making atonement for them according to the terms of that covenant, supplied the place of the surety thereof. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. VIII. How good and glorious soever any thing may appear to be, or really be, in the worship of God, or as a way of our coming to him, or walking before him, if it be not ratified in and by the immediate suretiship of Christ, it must give way unto that which is better; it could be neither durable in itself, nor make any thing perfect in them that made use of it.

Secondly, In what is positively asserted in the words we may observe,—

Ἰησοῦς. 1. The person who is the subject spoken of; and that is "Jesus." He had in general declared the nature of the priesthood of him who was to have that office, according to the order of Melchisedec; but he had not yet, in this whole chapter,—that is, from the beginning of this discourse,—mentioned who that person was, or named him. But here he makes application of the whole unto him. It is Jesus who in all these things was intended. And this he doth suitably unto his design and occasion. For two things were in question among the Hebrews: (1.) What was the nature of the office of the Messiah? (2.) Who was the person? For the first of these, he proves unto them, from their own acknowledged principles, that he was to be a priest; as also what was the nature of that priesthood, and what would be the necessary consequence of the setting up of that office in the church, and the exercise of it: this his whole precedent discourse is designed unto. Now he asserts the second part of the difference, namely, that it is Jesus who is this priest; because in him alone do all things concur that were to be in that priest, and he had now discharged the principal part and duty of that office.

It was sufficient for the church of the Jews to believe in the Messiah, and to own the work of redemption which he was to accomplish. Nor did the mere actual coming of Christ make it absolutely necessary that they should all immediately be obliged to believe him to be the person. Many, I doubt not, died after his incarnation and went to heaven without an actual belief that it was he who was their Redeemer. But their obligation unto faith towards that individual person arose from the declaration that was made of him, and the evidences given to prove him to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. So he tells those unto whom he preached and who saw his miracles, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John 8:24. It would not now suffice them to believe in the Messiah in general, but they were also to believe that Jesus was he, or they must perish for their unbelief. Howbeit they only were intended who, hearing his words and seeing his miracles, had sufficient evidence of his being the Son of God. Of others in the same church this was not as yet required. Nor, it may be, doth our Saviour oblige them immediately unto faith in this matter; only he declares what would be the event with them who, upon his accomplishment of his work on the earth, and the sending of the Holy Ghost after his ascension,—whereby he gave the principal declaration and evidence of his being the Messiah,—should continue in their unbelief. Hereon, and not before, the belief in his individual person, in "Jesus, the Son of God," became the foundation of the church; so that whoever believed not in him did die in their sins. Wherefore the apostles, immediately upon the coming of the Holy Ghost, made this the first and principal subject of their preaching, namely, that "Jesus was the Christ." See Acts 2–5. So our apostle in this place, having asserted the nature of the office of the promised Messiah, makes an application of it unto his person; as he also had done, chap. 2:9. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. IX. All the privileges, benefits, and advantages of the offices and mediation of Christ will not avail us, unless we reduce them all unto faith in his person. Indeed it is not so much what is done, though that be inconceivably great, as by whom it is done, namely, "Jesus, the Son of God," God and man in one person.

It is a matter of somewhat a surprising nature, that divers in these days do endeavour to divert the minds and faith of men from a respect unto the person of Christ. But that the crafts of Satan have made nothing, be it never so foolish or impious in religion, to seem strange, a man could not but admire how such an attempt should be either owned or countenanced. For my part, I must

acknowledge that I know no more of Christian religion but what makes me judge that the principal trouble of believers in this world lies herein, that they can no more fervently love, nor more firmly believe in the person of Christ, than what they have as yet attained unto. But this notion hath been vented and carried on among us by persons who, out of an aim after things novel and contrary to the received faith, have suffered themselves to be imposed on by those who have other principles than what they seem to own. For the Socinians, denying the divine nature of Christ, do their utmost, in the pursuit of that infidelity, to take the minds of men from a regard unto his person, and would reduce all religion unto a mere obedience unto his commands. And indeed there can be no place for that divine faith in him, trust on him, and love unto him, which the church has always professed, if it be supposed that he is not God and man in one person. And their reasonings, they are unto this purpose, which some represent unto us, who yet will not avow that principle from whence alone they are taken and do rise. But so long as we can hold the head, or this great foundation of religion, that the Lord Christ is the eternal Son of God,—which alone gives life and efficacy unto his whole work of mediation,—our faith in all its actings will be reduced unto his person; there it beginneth, there it endeth. It is Jesus who is this mediator and surety of the covenant, in whose person "God redeemed the church with his own blood."

2. That which is affirmed of this person is, that he was "made a surety."

Γέγονε. The way whereby he became so is expressed by γέγονε,—he was "made" so. So is this word used with respect unto him, Heb. 1:4: of the same importance with another translated "appointed," chap. 3:2; and it signifies what is expressed, chap. 5:5. The places may be consulted with our exposition of them. Respect is had herein unto the acts of God the Father in this matter. What are those acts of God, whether eternal or temporal, that did concur unto or any way belong unto the investiture of Christ in his offices, I have at large declared on chap. 1:1–3. And more particularly for what concerns his priesthood, it hath been handled apart in our exercitations on that subject. But we may here also observe, that,—

Obs. X. The whole undertaking of Christ, and the whole efficacy of the discharge of his office, depend on the appointment of God, even the Father.

3. It is affirmed that he was thus "made," "appointed," or "constituted," that is, by God himself, a "surety;" which is further declared by the addition of that whereunto his suretiship had a respect, namely, "a better covenant,"—κρείττονος διαθήκης.

Διαθήκης. Of the proper signification of the word διαθήκη, and its use, we must treat expressly afterwards. Here we shall only observe, that in this word the apostle takes many things as granted among the Hebrews; as,—

(1.) That there was to be another covenant or testament of God with and towards the church, besides that which he made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. The promises hereof are so frequently repeated by the prophets, especially those who prophesied towards the latter end of their church-state, that there could be no question about it, nor could they be ignorant of it.

(2.) That this new covenant or testament should be better than the former, which was to be disannulled thereby. This carried along with it its own evidence. For after God, in his wisdom and goodness, had made one covenant with his people, he would not remove it, abolish it, and take it away by another, unless that other were better than it; especially declaring so often as he doth that he granted them this new covenant as the highest effect of his grace and kindness towards them. And that indeed it was expressly promised to be a better covenant than the former, we shall see in the next chapter, if we live and God will.

(3.) It is supposed that this better covenant must have a surety. The original covenant that God made with Adam had none, and therefore was it quickly broken and disannulled. The especial covenant made with Israel had no surety, properly so called; only therein the high priest did represent what was to be done by any one that should undertake to be such a surety.

Ἔγγυος. Of the word and its signification we have spoken before. And in our inquiry into the nature of this suretiship of Christ, the whole will be resolved into this one question, namely, 'Whether the Lord Christ was made a surety only on the part of God unto us, to assure us that the promise of the covenant on his part should be accomplished; or also an undertaker on our part for the performance of what is required, if not of us, yet with respect unto us, that the promise may be accomplished?' The first of these is vehemently asserted by the Socinians, who are followed by Grotius and Hammond, in their annotations on this place.

The words of Schlichtingius are: "Sponsor fœderis appellatur Jesus, quod nomine Dei nobis spoponderit; id est, fidem fecerit Deum fœderis promissiones servaturum esse. Non verò quasi pro nobis spoponderit Deo, nostrorumve debitorum solutionem in se receperit. Nec enim nos misimus Christum sed Deus, cujus nomine Christus ad nos venit, fœdus nobiscum panxit, ejusque promissiones ratas fore spopondit et in se recepit, ideoque nec sponsor simpliciter sed fœderis sponsor nominatur. Spopondit autem Christus pro fœderis divini veritate, non tantùm quatenùs id firmum ratumque fore verbis perpetuò testatus est, sed etiam quatenus muneris sui fidem maximis rerum ipsarum comprobavit documentis, tum perfectâ vitæ innocentiâ et sanctitate, tum divinis planè quæ patravit operibus, tum mortis adeò truculentæ, quam pro doctrinæ suæ veritate subiit, perpessione." After which he subjoins a long discourse about the evidences which we have of the veracity of Christ. And herein we have a brief account of their whole opinion concerning the mediation of Christ. The words of Grotius are: "Spopondit Christus; i. e., nos certos promissi fecit, non solis verbis, sed perpetuâ vitæ sanctitate, morte ob id toleratâ, et miraculis plurimis;" which are an abridgment of the discourse of Schlichtingius. To the same purpose Dr Hammond expounds it, that "he was a sponsor or surety for God unto the confirmation of the promises of the covenant."

On the other hand, the generality of expositors, ancient and modern, of the Roman and Protestant churches, affirm that the Lord Christ, as the surety of the covenant, was properly a surety or undertaker unto God for us, and not a surety or undertaker unto us for God. And because this is a matter of great importance, wherein the faith and consolation of the church are highly concerned, I shall insist distinctly upon it.

(1.) And first, we may consider the argument that is produced to prove that Christ was only a surety for God unto us. Now this is taken neither from the name nor nature of the office and work of a surety, nor from the nature of the covenant whereof he was a surety, nor of the office wherein he was so. But the sole argument insisted on is, "That we do not give Christ as a surety of the covenant unto God, but he gives him unto us; and therefore he is a surety for God and the accomplishment of his promises, and not for us, to pay our debts, or to answer what is required of us."

But there is no force in this argument; for it belongs not unto the nature of a surety by whom he is or may be designed unto his office and work therein. His own voluntary susception of the office and work is all that is required thereunto, however he may be designed or induced to undertake it. He who of his own accord doth voluntarily undertake for another, on what grounds, reasons, or considerations soever he doth so, is his surety. And this the Lord Christ did in the behalf of the church: for when it was said, "Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings for sin, God would not have," or accept as sufficient to make the atonement that he required, so as that the covenant might be established and made effectual unto us; then said he, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," Heb. 10:5–9. He willingly and voluntarily, out of his own abundant goodness and love, took upon him to make atonement for us; wherein he was our surety. And accordingly this undertaking is ascribed unto that love which he exercised herein, Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16; Rev. 1:5. And there was this in it, moreover, that he took upon him our nature, or the seed of Abraham; wherein he was our surety. So that although we neither did nor could appoint him so to be, yet he took from us that wherein and whereby he was so: which was as much as if we had designed him unto his work, as to the true reason of his being our surety. Wherefore, notwithstanding those antecedent transactions that were between the Father and him in this matter, it was the voluntary engagement of himself to be our surety, and his taking our nature upon him for that end, which was the formal reason of his being instituted in that office.

(2.) We may consider the arguments whence it is evident that he neither was nor could be a surety unto us for God, but was so for us unto God. For,—

[1.] Ἔγγυος, or ἐγγυητής, a "surety," is one that undertaketh for another wherein he is defective, really or in reputation. Whatever that undertaking be, whether in words of promise, or in depositing of real security in the hands of an arbitrator, or by any other personal engagement of life and body, it respects the defect of the person for whom any one becomes a surety. Such an one is sponsor, or "fidejussor," in all good authors and common use of speech. And if any one be of absolute credit himself, and of a reputation every way unquestionable, there is no need of a surety, unless in case of mortality. The words of a surety in the behalf of another, whose ability or reputation is dubious, are, "Ad me recipio, faciet aut faciam." And when ἔγγυος is taken adjectively, as sometimes it is, it signifies him who is "satisdationibus obnoxius,"—liable to payments for others that are non-solvent.

[2.] God can therefore have no surety properly, because there can be no imagination of any defect on his part. There may be, indeed, a question whether any word or promise be a word or promise of God. To assure us hereof is not the work of a surety, but of any one or any means that may give evidence that so it is. But upon a supposition that what is proposed is his word or promise, there can be no imagination or fear of any defect on his part, so as that there should be any need of a surety for the performance of it. He doth, indeed, make use of witnesses to confirm his word; that is, to testify that such promises he hath made, and so he will do. So the Lord Christ was his witness: Isa. 43:10, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen." But they were not at all his sureties. So Christ affirms that he came into the world to "bear witness unto the truth," John 18:37: that is, the truth of the promises of God; for he was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises unto the fathers," Rom. 15:8. But a surety for God properly so called he was not, nor could be. The distance and difference are wide enough between a witness and a surety; for a surety must be of more ability, or more credit and reputation, than he for whom he is a surety, or there is no need of his suretiship. This none can be for God, no not the Lord Christ himself, who in his whole work was the servant of the Father. And the apostle doth not use this word in a general, improper sense, for any one that by any means gives assurance of any other thing: for so he had asserted nothing peculiar unto Christ; for in such a sense all the prophets and apostles were sureties for God, and many of them confirmed the truth of his word and promises with the laying down of their lives. But such a surety he intends as undertaketh to do that for others which they cannot do for themselves, or at least are not reputed to be able to do what is required of them.

[3.] The apostle had before at large declared who and what was God's surety in this matter of the covenant, and how impossible it was that he should have any other: and this was himself alone interposing himself by his oath. For in this cause, "because he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself," Heb. 6:13, 14. Wherefore if God would give any other surety besides himself, it must be one greater than he. This being every way impossible, he swears by himself only. Many ways he may and doth use for the declaring and testifying of his truth unto us, that we may know and believe it to be his word,—and so the Lord Christ in his ministry was the principal witness of the truth of God,—but other surety than himself he can have none. And therefore,—

[4.] When he would have us in this matter, not only to come unto the "full assurance of faith" concerning his promises, but also to have "strong consolation," he resolves it wholly into "the immutability of his counsel," as declared by his promise and oath, Heb. 6:17–19. So that neither is God capable of having any surety properly so called, neither do we stand in need of any on his part, for the confirmation of our faith in the highest degree.

[5.] We on all accounts stand in need of a surety for us, or on our behalf. Neither without the interposition of such a surety could any covenant between God and us be firm and stable, or "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." In the first covenant, made with Adam, there was no surety, but God and man were the immediate covenanters. And although we were then in a state and condition able to perform and answer all the terms of that covenant, yet was it broken and disannulled. If this came to pass by the failure of the promise of God, it was necessary that, on the making of a new covenant, he should have a surety to undertake for him, that the covenant might be stable and everlasting. But this is false, and blasphemous to imagine. It was man alone who failed and brake that covenant. Wherefore it was necessary that, upon the making of the new covenant, and that with a design and purpose that it should never be disannulled as the former was, we should have a surety and undertaker for us; for if that first covenant was not firm and stable, because there was no surety to undertake for us, notwithstanding all that ability which we had to answer the terms of it, how much less can any other be so, now our natures are become depraved and sinful! Wherefore we alone are capable of a surety, properly so called, for us; we alone stood in need of him; and without him the covenant could not be firm and inviolable on our part: the surety, therefore, of this covenant is so with God for us.

[6.] It is the priesthood of Christ that the apostle treats of in this place, and that alone. Wherefore he is a surety as he is a priest, and in the discharge of that office; and is therefore so with God on our behalf. This Schlichtingius observes, and is aware what will ensue thereon against his pretensions, which he endeavours to obviate: "Mirum," saith he, "porrò alicui videri posset, cur D. Auctor de Christi sacerdotio in superioribus et in sequentibus agens, derepente eum sponsorem fœderis, non verò sacerdotem vocet. Cur non dixerit, tantò præstantioris fœderis factus est sacerdos Jesus? hoc enim planè requirere videtur totus orationis contextus. Credibile est in voce sponsoris sacerdotium quoque Christi intelligi. Sponsoris enim non est solùm alieno nomine quippiam promittere, et fidem suam pro alio interponere; sed etiam, si ita res ferat,

alterius nomine id quod spopondit, præstare. In rebus quidem humanis, si id non præstet is pro quo sponsor fidejussit; hic verò propter contrariam causam (nam prior hic locum habere non potest) nempe quatenus ille, pro quo spopondit Christus, per ipsum Christum promissa sua nobis exhibet, quà in re præcipuè Christi sacerdotium continetur."

Ans. 1st. It may indeed seem strange, unto any one who imagineth Christ to be such a surety as he doth, why the apostle should so call him and so introduce him in the description of his priestly office, as that which belongeth thereunto. But grant what is the proper work and duty of a surety, and for whom the Lord Jesus was a surety, and it is evident that nothing more proper or pertinent could be mentioned by him, when he was in the declaration of that office. 2dly. He confesseth that by his exposition of this suretiship of Christ, as making a surety for God, he contradicteth the nature and only notion of a surety among men. For such a one, he acknowledgeth, doth nothing but in the defect and inability of them for whom he is engaged and doth undertake. He is to pay that which they owe, and to do what is to be done by them, which they cannot perform. And if this be not the notion of a surety in this place, the apostle makes use of a word nowhere else used in the whole Scripture, to teach us that which it doth never signify among men: which is improbable and absurd; for the sole reason why he did make use of it was, that from the nature and notion of it among men in other cases, we may understand the signification of it, what he intends by it, and what under that name he ascribes unto the Lord Jesus. 3dly. He hath no way to solve the apostle's mention of Christ being a surety in the description of his priestly office, but by overthrowing the nature of that office also: for, to confirm this absurd notion, that Christ as a priest was a surety for God, he would have us believe that the priesthood of Christ consists in his making effectual unto us the promises of God, or his effectual communicating of the good things promised unto us; the falsehood of which notion, really destructive of the priesthood of Christ, I have elsewhere at large detected and confuted. Wherefore, seeing the Lord Christ is the surety of the covenant as a priest, and all the sacerdotal actings of Christ have God for their immediate object, and are performed with him on our behalf, he was a surety for us also.

(3.) It remaineth that we inquire positively how the Lord Christ was the surety of the new covenant, and what is the benefit we receive thereby. And unto this purpose we must first consider that opinion of some that the whole end of the mediation of Christ was only to procure the new covenant: although at first view it be irreconcilable unto the nature and notion of a surety; for a

surety is not the procurer of that whereof he is the surety, but only the undertaker for its accomplishment. But we must more distinctly consider this assertion, and in what sense Christ may be said to procure the new covenant by his death and mediation. And to this end we must observe, that the new covenant may be considered divers ways, in various respects:—

[1.] In the designation and preparation of its terms and benefits in the counsel of God. And this, although it have the nature of an eternal decree, yet is it distinguished from the decree of election, which first and properly respects the subjects or persons for whom grace and glory are prepared; for this respects the preparation only of that grace and glory, as to the way and manner of their communication. It is true, this purpose, or counsel of God's will, is not called the covenant of grace, which is the express declared exemplification of it. The covenant of grace, I say, is only the declaration of this counsel of God's will, accompanied with the means and power of its accomplishment, and the prescription of the ways whereby we are to be interested in it, and made partakers of the benefits of it. But in the inquiry after the procuring cause of the new covenant, it is the first thing that ought to come under consideration; for nothing can be the procuring cause of this covenant which is not so of this spring and fountain of it,—of this idea of it in the mind of God. But this is nowhere in the Scripture affirmed to be the effect of the death or mediation of Christ; and so to ascribe it, is to overthrow the whole freedom of eternal grace and love. Neither can any thing that is absolutely eternal, as is this decree and counsel of God, be the effect of, or be procured by, any thing that is external and temporal. And besides, it is expressly assigned unto absolute love and grace: see Eph. 1:4–6, with all those places where the love of God is assigned as the sole cause of the designation of Christ unto his office, and the sending of him.

[2.] It may be considered with respect unto the federal transactions between the Father and Son concerning the accomplishment of this counsel of his will. What these were, wherein they did consist, I have declared at large in my exercitations. Neither do I call this the covenant of grace absolutely, nor is it so called in the Scripture: but it is that wherein it had its establishment, as unto all the ways, means, and ends of its accomplishment; and by it were all things so disposed, as that it might be effectual unto the glory of the wisdom, grace, righteousness, and power of God. Wherefore the covenant of grace could not be procured by any means or cause but that which was the cause of this covenant of the mediator, or of God the Father with the Son as undertaking the work of mediation. And as this is nowhere ascribed unto the death of Christ in the

Scripture, so to assert it is contrary unto all spiritual reason and understanding. Who can conceive that Christ, by his death, should procure the agreement between God and him that he should die?

[3.] With respect unto the declaration of it. This you may call God's making or establishing of it with us, if you please; though making of the covenant in the Scripture is applied only unto its execution or actual application unto persons. But this declaration of the grace of God, and the provision in the covenant of the mediator for the making of it effectual unto his glory, is most usually called the covenant of grace. And this is twofold:—

1st. In the way of a singular and absolute promise; as it was first declared unto and thereby established with Adam, and afterwards with Abraham. This is the declaration of the purpose of God, or the free determination of his will as to his dealing with sinners, on the supposition of the fall and the forfeiture of their first covenant state. Hereof the grace and will of God were the only cause, Heb. 8:8. And the death of Christ could not be the means of its procurement; for he himself, and all that he was to do for us, were the substance of that promise wherein this declaration of God's grace and purpose was made, or of this covenant of grace, which was introduced and established in the room of that which was broken and disannulled, as unto the ends and benefits of a covenant. The substance of the first promise, wherein the whole covenant of grace was virtually comprised, directly respected and expressed the giving of him for the recovery of mankind from sin and misery, by his death, Gen. 3:15. Wherefore if he, and all the benefits of his mediation, his death and all the effects of it, be contained in the promise of the covenant, that is, in the covenant itself, then was not his death the procuring cause of that covenant, nor do we owe it thereunto.

2dly. In the additional prescription of the way and means whereby it is the will of God that we shall enter into a covenant state with him, or be interested in the benefits of it. This being virtually comprised in the absolute promise, is expressed in other places by the way of the conditions required on our part. This is not the covenant, but the constitution of the terms on our part whereon we are made partakers of it. Nor is the constitution of these terms an effect of the death of Christ, or procured thereby. It is a mere effect of the sovereign wisdom and grace of God. The things themselves as bestowed on us, communicated unto us, wrought in us by grace, are all of them effects of the death of Christ; but the constitution of them to be the terms and conditions of the covenant is an act of mere sovereign wisdom and grace. God so loved the world as to send

his only-begotten Son to die, not that faith and repentance might be the means of salvation, but that all his elect might believe, and that all that believe might not perish, but have life everlasting. But yet it is granted, that the constitution of these terms of the covenant doth respect the federal transactions between the Father and the Son, wherein they were ordered to the praise of the glory of God's grace; and so, although their constitution was not the procurement of his death, yet without respect unto it, it had not been. Wherefore the sole cause of making the new covenant, in any sense, was the same with that of giving Christ himself to be our mediator, namely, the purpose, counsel, goodness, grace, and love of God, as it is everywhere expressed in the Scripture.

It may be therefore inquired what respect the covenant of grace hath unto the death of Christ, or what influence it hath thereinto.

I answer, it hath a threefold respect thereunto:—

[1.] In that it was confirmed, ratified, and made irrevocable thereby. This our apostle insists upon at large, Heb. 9:15–20. And he compares his blood, in his death and sacrifice of himself, unto the sacrifices and their blood whereby the old covenant was confirmed, purified, dedicated, or established, verses 18, 19. Now these sacrifices did not procure that covenant, or prevail with God to enter into it, but only ratified and confirmed it; and this was done in the new covenant by the blood of Christ, in the way that shall be afterwards declared.

[2.] He thereby underwent and performed all that which the righteousness and wisdom of God required, that the effects, fruits, benefits, and grace intended, designed, and prepared in the new covenant, might be effectually accomplished and communicated unto sinners. Hence, although he procured not the covenant for us by his death, yet he was, in his person, mediation, life, and death, the only cause and means whereby the whole grace of the covenant is made effectual unto us. For,—

[3.] All the benefits of it were procured by him; that is, all the grace, mercy, privileges, and glory that God had prepared in the counsel of his will, and proposed in the covenant or promises of it, are purchased, merited, and procured by his death, and effectually communicated or applied unto all the covenanters, by virtue thereof, with other of his mediatory acts. And this is much more an eminent procuring of the new covenant than what is pretended about the procurement of its terms and conditions. For if he should have procured no more but this, if we owe this only unto his mediation, that God would thereon, and did, grant and establish this rule, law, and promise, that

whosoever believed should be saved, it was possible that no one should be saved thereby; yea, if he did no more, considering our state and condition, it was impossible that any one should so be.

These things being premised, we shall now briefly declare how or wherein he was the surety of the covenant, as he is here called.

A surety, sponsor, "vas," "præs," "fidejussor," for us the Lord Christ was, by his voluntarily undertaking, out of his rich grace and love, to do, answer, and perform, all that is required on our part, that we may enjoy the benefits of the covenant, the grace and glory prepared, proposed, and promised in it, in the way and manner determined on by divine wisdom. And this may be reduced unto two heads:—

[1.] He undertook, as the surety of the covenant, to answer for all the sins of those who are to be and are made partakers of the benefits of it;—that is, to undergo the punishment due unto their sins; to make atonement for them, by offering himself a propitiatory sacrifice for their expiation; redeeming them by the price of his blood from their state of misery and bondage under the law and the curse of it, Isa. 53:4–6, 10; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 6:20; Rom. 3:25, 26; Heb. 10:5–10; Rom. 8:2, 3; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; Gal. 3:13. And this was absolutely necessary, that the grace and glory prepared in the covenant might be communicated unto us. Without this undertaking of his, and performance of it, the righteousness and faithfulness of God would not permit that sinners, such as had apostatized from him, despised his authority, and rebelled against him, falling thereby under the sentence and curse of the law, should again be received into his favour, and be made partakers of grace and glory. This, therefore, the Lord Christ took upon himself, as the surety of the covenant.

[2.] That those who were to be taken into this covenant should receive grace enabling them to comply with the terms of it, fulfil its conditions, and yield the obedience which God required therein. For, by the ordination of God, he was to procure, and did merit and procure, for them the Holy Spirit, and all the needful supplies of grace, to make them new creatures, and enable them to yield obedience unto God from a new principle of spiritual life, and that faithfully unto the end. So was he the surety of this better covenant.

Obs. XI. The stability of the new covenant depends on the suretiship of Christ, and is secured unto believers thereby.—The introduction of a surety in any case is to give stability and security; for it is never done but on a supposition of some weakness or defect, on one account or other If, in any contract,

bargain, or agreement, a man be esteemed every way responsible, both for ability and fidelity, there is no need of a surety, nor is it required. But yet, whereas there is a defect or weakness amongst all men, mentioned by our apostle in the next verse, namely, that they are all mortal and subject unto death,—in which case neither ability nor fidelity will avail any thing,—men in all cases of importance need sureties. These give the utmost confirmation that affairs among men are capable of. So doth the suretiship of Christ on our behalf in this covenant. For the evidencing whereof, we may consider,—

1. The first covenant, as made with Adam, had no surety. As unto that which in the new covenant the suretiship of Christ doth principally respect, it had no need of any: for there was no sin, transgression, or rebellion against God, to be satisfied for; so that it was absolutely incapable of a surety unto that end. But as to the second part of it, or his undertaking for us, that, through supplies of strength from him, we shall abide faithful in the covenant, according to the terms and tenor of it, this had no inconsistency with that first state. As the Lord Christ, upon his undertaking the work of mediation, became an immediate head unto the angels that sinned not, whereby they received their establishment and security from any future defection, so might he have been such a head unto, and such an undertaker for man in innocency. No created nature was, or could have been, unchangeable in its condition and state, merely on its root of creation. As some of the angels fell at first, forsaking their habitation, falling from the principle of obedience, which had no other root but in themselves; so the rest of them, all of them, might afterwards have in like manner apostatized and fallen from their own innate stability, had they not been gathered up into the new head of the creation, the Son of God as mediator, receiving a new relation from thence, and establishment thereby. So it might have been with man in innocency; but God, in his infinite, sovereign wisdom, saw it not meet that so it should be. Man shall be left to the exercise of that ability of living unto God which he had received in his creation, and which was sufficient for that end;—a surety God gave him not. And therefore, although he had all the advantage which a sinless nature, filled with holy principles, dispositions, and inclinations, free from all vicious habits, rebellious affections, inordinate imaginations, could afford unto him, yet he brake the covenant, and forfeited all the benefits thereof. Whatever there was besides in that covenant of grace, power, ability, and the highest obligations unto duty, yet all was lost for want of a surety. And this abundantly testifies unto the pre-eminence of Christ in all things. For whereas Adam, with all the innumerable

advantages he had,—that is, all helps necessary in himself, and no opposition or difficulty from himself to conflict withal,—yet utterly brake the covenant wherein he was created and placed; believers, who have little strength in themselves, and a powerful inbred opposition unto their stability, are yet secured in their station, by the interposition of the Lord Christ as their surety.

2. When God made a covenant with the people in the wilderness, to manifest that there could be no stability in it without respect unto a surety, that it could not continue, no, not for a day, he caused it to be dedicated or confirmed with the blood of sacrifices. This the apostle declares, and withal its typicalness with respect unto the new covenant, and the confirmation of it with the blood of Christ, Heb. 9:18–21. And afterwards, as we have declared, the high priest, in the sacrifices that he offered, was the typical mediator and surety of that covenant. And the end of this appointment of God, was to manifest that it was from the blood of the true sacrifice, namely, that of Jesus Christ, that the new covenant was to receive its stability. And we need a surety unto this purpose,—

(1.) Because, in the state and condition of sin, we are not capable of immediate dealing or covenanting with God. There can be no covenanting between God and sinners, unless there be some one to stand forth in our name, to receive the terms of God, and to undertake for us. So when God began to treat immediately from heaven with the people of old, they all jointly professed, such was the greatness and glory of God, such the terror of his majesty, that it was impossible for them so to treat with him; and if he spake unto them any more, they should all die and be consumed. Wherefore, with one consent, they desired that there might be one appointed between God and them, to transact all things and to undertake for them as to their obedience; which God well approved in them, Deut. 5:23–31. Adam, indeed, in the state of innocency, could treat immediately with God, as unto that covenant wherein he was placed; for notwithstanding his infinite distance from God, yet God had made him for converse with himself, and did not despise the work of his own hands. But immediately upon the entrance of sin he was sensible of the loss of that privilege; whereon he both fled and hid himself from the presence of God. And hence those who of old thought they had seen God, concluded that they should die, as being sensible of their incapacity to treat immediately with him. So when the prophet cried out that he was "undone," or "cut off," because of the immediate presence of God, "his eyes having seen the King, the LORD of hosts," Isa. 6:5, he was not relieved from his apprehensions until "his mouth was touched with a live coal from the altar,"—a type of the mediation and sacrifice

of Christ. Whilst we have any thing of sin remaining in us, we can have nothing to do with God immediately. Wherefore, that there may be any covenant between God and us, much more such an one as shall be "ordered in all things, and sure," there must be one to stand before God in our stead, to receive the terms of God and to declare them unto us, and to undertake for us that we shall stand unto them and make them good, to the glory of God. And in this sense was the new covenant firstly made with Christ, not only as he undertook the work of mediation, which he did upon the especial eternal compact which was between the Father and him, but also as he undertook for all the elect to receive the terms of the covenant from God for them,—in which sense the promise in the first place was made unto the seed that is one, which is Christ, Gal. 3:16,—and to answer for them, that they should receive and stand to those terms. For he said, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour," Isa. 63:8. Wherefore it could not be, upon the account of God's holiness and glorious greatness, that there should be any new covenant at all between God and sinners, without the interposition of a surety. Nor did it become the infinite wisdom of God; after man had broken and disannulled the covenant made with him in innocency, to enter into a new covenant with him, in his fallen condition, without an immediate undertaker that it should be assuredly kept and the ends of it attained. If you have lent a man a thousand pounds upon his own security, when he owed nothing else, nor was indebted to any other, and he hath not only failed in his payment, but contracted other debts innumerable; will you now lend him ten thousand pounds on the same security, expecting to receive it again? Had God entered into never so many covenants with men, without such a surety and undertaker, they would have been all broken and disannulled, as he well knew. He knew "that we would deal very treacherously, and were" rightly "called transgressors from the womb," Isa. 48:8. But so to covenant with us, would no way have become the infinite wisdom of God. Wherefore "he laid help upon one that is mighty, he exalted one chosen out of the people," Ps. 89:19. He committed this work unto Jesus Christ; and then said concerning us, "Now deliver them, for I have found a ransom."

(2.) The changeableness of our condition in this world requires a surety for us, to render the covenant firm, stable, and unalterable. So the psalmist, complaining of our frail and mutable condition, shows that it is in Christ alone that we have all our establishment: Ps. 102:25–28, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth," etc. That it is the Lord Christ, the Son of God, that in

an especial manner is intended, I have showed and proved at large on chap. 1:10, where this passage in the psalm is applied unto him. And the conclusion that the psalmist makes from the consideration of his immutability is this, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee," verse 28. Without an interest in him and his stability we are subject to change, alter, decline, so as it is impossible the covenant should be sure unto us. The very nature of the principle whereby we live and walk before God in this world, renders our condition alterable in itself; for "we walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. 5:7. It is vision alone, or the immediate enjoyment of God, which will instate us in an unalterable condition. Whilst we walk by faith it is otherwise with us, and we depend wholly on our surety for our security in the covenant.

(3.) Who is it, among the whole society of believers, that is not sensible of such actual dispositions unto change, yea, such actual changes, as that it is evident unto him that his final stability depends on the undertaking of a surety? No man can give an account, from himself, whence it is that he hath not already utterly broken covenant with God. There is no one corruption, no one temptation, but doth evidence a sufficiency in itself to defeat us of our covenant interest, if we stood upon our own bottoms. It is faith alone with respect unto the suretiship of Christ which discovers how we have been kept hitherto, and which gives us any comfortable prospect of our future preservation. And the same is evident from the consideration of all the adversaries of our covenant interest.

Here we might stay a while, to contemplate the glory of divine wisdom and grace in providing this surety of the covenant, and to adore the infinite love and condescension of Him who undertook the discharge of this office for us; but we must proceed, only observing,—

Obs. XII. That the Lord Christ's undertaking to be our surety gives the highest obligation unto all duties of obedience according to the covenant.—For he hath undertaken for us that we shall yield unto God this covenant obedience, and said, "Surely they are children that will not lie." He is no believer who understands not somewhat of the force and power of this obligation.

Hebrews 7: 23–25

Καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονές εἰσι γεγονότες ἱερεῖς, διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν· ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην· ὅθεν καὶ σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελὲς δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τῷ Θεῷ, πάντοτε ζῶν, εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν.

Καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονες. Vulg. Lat., "et alii quidem plures facti sunt sacerdotes," "and many others truly were made priests;" or, "and others truly were made many priests." The Rhemists reduce it to this sense, "and the other, indeed, were made priests being many;" rendering οἱ μέν by "alii," instead of "illi," which corrupts the sense, and takes off from the immediate respect unto the priests of the order of Aaron, intended by the apostle. "Et illi quidem plures sunt facti sacerdotes," "and they truly were many priests." So the Syr., וְהֵנוּן חֲוּו כּוּמְרֵא כַּנְיָאֵא, "and they were many priests;" omitting the note of asseveration, μέν, "truly."

Εἰσι γεγονότες, "were made:" not only the event and matter of fact, but God's institution is also intended.

Δια το θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι. Vulg. Lat., "idcirco quòd morte prohiberentur permanere." Rhem., "because that by death they were prohibited to continue." Ours "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death;" "quoniam per mortem non sinebantur permanere," which is the true meaning of the words. Syr., "because they died, and were not left to continue."

Ο δε, "hic autem," "at iste;" "but this man," διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, "quòd maneat in æternum," "quoniam ipse in æternum maneat," "propterea quòd in æternum manet;" all to the same purpose. Syr., מָטוּל דְּלְעָלַם קָיֵם, "because be standeth" (or "continueth") "for ever."

Ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην, "sempiternum," "perpetuum habet sacerdotium." Syriac, לָא עָבְרָא כּוּמָרוּתֵהּ, "his priesthood passeth not away." Ἀπαράβατος, "that may not be transgressed," and so "not altered;" as ἀπαράβατος νόμος, a "sacred law" which none ought to transgress, which cannot in any thing be dispensed withal: and by consequence only, it is that "which passeth not away," "that priesthood (τὴν ἱερωσύνην) which altereth not," which cannot be changed.

Οθεν καὶ σώζειν. Syr., וּמְשֻׁבַּח לְמַאחָיִד, "and he can quicken," or "enliven," or "give eternal life." Εἰς τὸ παντελές. Syr., לְעָלַם, "for ever," respecting duration of time; "in perpetuum," Vulg. Lat. Others, "perfectè," "perfectly," completely. Ours, "to the uttermost."

Τοὺς προσερχομένους, "accedentes per semetipsum ad Deum." Rhemists, "he is able to save for ever, going by himself unto God;" strangely darkening the sense. For "going" seems to respect his own going to God, which the Vulg., "accedentes," will not bear, "eos qui per ipsum accedunt ad Deum," "those who by him draw nigh to God."

Πάντοτε ζῶν, "semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis;" "always living to make intercession for us," instead of "for them," αὐτῶν. Syr., וּמַסֵּק צְלָוָתֵא חֲלָפַיְהוֹן, "causing to ascend," or "offering prayers for them."

Ver. 23–25.—And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this [man], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them also to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The apostle in these words proceedeth unto his last argument from the consideration of the priesthood of Christ, as typed and represented by that of Melchisedec. And his intention is still to prove the excellency of it above the Levitical, and of his person above theirs. And in particular, he makes it manifest that "the bringing in of the better hope" did "perfect" or "consummate" all things, which the law could not do.

That he hath in these verses a respect unto Melchisedec as a type of Christ, and what we are taught thereby, is evident from the matter treated of in them. He had observed, that, as to the description given of him in the Scripture, he "abideth a priest continually," verse 3; and that "it is witnessed of him that he liveth," seeing it is nowhere mentioned that he died, verse 8. And this is the last consideration of him which he improveth unto his purpose; and it is that which gives virtue and efficacy unto all the others that he had before insisted on. Set this aside, and all the others, whether advantages or excellencies, which he had discoursed of, would be as ineffectual unto the ends aimed at as the law itself. For what profit could it be unto the church, to have so excellent and glorious a priest for a season, and then immediately to be deprived of him, by the expiration of his office?

Moreover, as what the apostle affirms here of Christ hath respect unto what he had before observed concerning Melchisedec; so what he affirms of the Levitical priests depends on what he had before declared concerning them, namely, that they were all mortal, dying men, and no more, and who actually died in their successive generations, verse 8.

The words, therefore, have three things in them in general:—

1. The state and condition of the Levitical priests by reason of their mortality, verse 23. This he observes, because he is not declaring the dignity of Christ and his priesthood absolutely, but with respect unto them; whose state, therefore, was the antithesis in the comparison.

2. The state and condition of the priesthood of Christ on the account of his glorious immortality, verse 24.

3. The blessed effects and consequents of the priesthood of Christ, inasmuch as, by virtue of his immortality, he was a priest for ever, verse 25.

In the FIRST (verse 23) there is, 1. The introduction of his assertion and observation; καὶ οἱ μέν,—"and they truly," 2. What he affirms of those priests; "they were many." 3. Whence that came to pass; namely, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:" which is not alleged only as the cause and reason of their being many, but also as a proof of their weakness and infirmity.

1. In the introduction of his assertion, there is a note of connection, and another of asseveration.

Καί. The first is the copulative conjunction, καί, "and." A process unto a new argument, to the same purpose with those foregoing, is intended hereby. The former design is continued, and a new confirmation of it is added: for he resolved to omit nothing that was of moment and unto his purpose.

Οἱ μίν. There is, secondly, a vehemency in his assertion, or a note of asseveration; "and they truly." He had used the same note before in the same manner, verse 21; where we omit the emphasis of it without cause. And in other places the same translators render this particle by "truly," as they do here, Acts 1:5. But he doth not so much assert a thing by it that was dubious, as positively declare that which was well known, and could no way be gainsaid by them with whom he had to do. And an argument pressed "ex concessis" is forcible. This is a known truth.

Πλείονίς εἰσι γεγονότες ἱερεῖς. 2. That which he affirms of them is, that "they were many priests;" or, "there were many made priests;" or, "they who were made priests were many." The sense is the same. By the appointment of God himself there were "many made priests," or executed the office of the priesthood. It is the high priests only, Aaron and his successors, of whom he speaks; and it is with respect unto their succession one to another that he affirms they were "many." This both the reason of it which he subjoins, and what he afterwards adds concerning the priesthood of Christ, wherein there was no succession, do evidently declare; for there neither was nor could be, by the law, any more than one at a time. Perhaps, in the disorder and confusion of that church, there might be more that were so called and esteemed, as were Annas and Caiaphas; but that confusion he takes no notice of, but attends unto what always was, or ought to have been, according to the law.

By succession these high priests were many; for from Aaron, the first of them, unto Phinehas, who was destroyed with the temple, there were inclusively fourscore and three high priests. Of these, thirteen lived under the tabernacle, before the building of the temple by Solomon; eighteen under the first temple, unto its destruction by the Babylonians; and all the rest lived under the second temple, which yet stood no longer than the first. And the multiplication of high priests under the second temple the Jews look upon as a punishment, and token of God's displeasure; for "because of the sins of a nation, their rulers are many," and frequently changed.

Whatever advantages there may be in an orderly succession, yet is it absolutely an evidence of imperfection. And by the appointment of this order God signified an imperfection and mutability in that church-state. Succession, indeed, was a relief against death; but it was but a relief, and so supposed a want and weakness. Under the gospel it is not so, as we shall see afterwards. Observe, that,—

Obs. I. God will not fail to provide instruments for his work that he hath to accomplish. If many priests be needful, many the church shall have.

Διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν. 3. The reason of this multiplication of priests, was "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." They were mortal men, subject unto death, and they died. Death suffered them not to continue in the execution of their office. It forbade them so to do, in the name of the great sovereign Lord of life and death. And hereof an instance was given in Aaron, the first of them. God, to show the nature of this priesthood

unto the people, and to manifest that the everlasting priest was not yet come, commanded Aaron to die in the sight of all the congregation, Num. 20:25–29. So did they all afterwards, as other men, die in their several generations. They were all by death forbidden to continue. Death laid an injunction on them, one after another, from proceeding any farther in the administration of their office. It is not, surely, without some especial design that the apostle thus expresseth their dying, 'They were by death prohibited to continue.' Wherefore he shows hereby, (1.) The way whereby an end was put unto their personal administration; and that was by death. (2.) That there was an imperfection in the administration of that office, which was so frequently interrupted. (3.) That they were seized upon by death, whether they would or no; when, it may be, they would have earnestly desired to continue, and the people also would have rejoiced in it. Death came on them, neither desired nor expected, with his prohibition. (4.) That when death came and seized on them, it kept them under its power, so that they could never more attend unto their office. But it was otherwise with the priest of the better covenant, as we shall see immediately. Observe,—

Obs. II. There is such a necessity for the continual administration of the sacerdotal office in behalf of the church, that the interruption of it by the death of the priests was an argument of the weakness of that priesthood.

The high priest is the sponsor and mediator of the covenant. Those of old were so typically, and by way of representation. Wherefore all covenant transactions between God and the church must be through him. He is to offer up all sacrifices, and therein represent all our prayers. And it is evident from thence what a ruin it would be unto the church to be without a high priest one moment. Who would venture a surprisal unto his own soul in such a condition? Could any man enjoy a moment's peace, if he supposed that in his extremity the high priest might die? This now is provided against, as we shall see in the next verse.

Ver. 24.—"But this [man], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

SECONDLY, In opposition unto what was observed in the Levitical priests, the contrary is here affirmed of the Lord Christ. And the design of the apostle is still the same,—namely, to evince, by all sorts of instances, his pre-eminence as a priest above them as such also.

Ὁ δέ. 1. The person spoken of is expressed by ὁ δέ. The exceptive conjunction, δέ, "but," answereth unto μέν, before used, and introduceth the other member of the antithesis;—ὁ, "hic," "ille," "iste;" 'he of whom we speak,—namely, Jesus, the surety of the now testament.' We render it, "this man," not improperly; he was the "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Nor doth the calling of him "this man," exclude his divine nature; for he was truly a man, though God and man in one person. And the things here ascribed unto him were wrought in and by the human nature, though he that wrought them was God also: "But he," or "this man," who was represented by Melchisedec, "of whom we speak."

2. It is affirmed of this person, that he hath "an unchangeable priesthood;" the ground and reason whereof is assigned, namely, "because he continueth ever:" which must be first considered.

Διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτόν. The sole reason here insisted on by the apostle why the Levitical priests were many, is because they were forbidden by death to continue. It is sufficient, therefore, on the contrary, to prove the perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ, that he abideth for ever. For he doth not absolutely hereby prove the perpetuity of the priesthood, but his perpetual, uninterrupted administration of it;—διὰ τὸ μένειν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

This was the faith of the Jews concerning the Messiah, and his office. "We have heard," say they, "out of the law, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα," John 12:34;—"that Christ abideth for ever:" whereon they could not understand what he told them about his being "lifted up" by death. And so the word μένει signifieth "to abide," "to continue" in any state or condition, John 21:22, 23. And this was that which principally he was typed in by Melchisedec; concerning whom there is no record as to the beginning of days or end of life, but, as unto the Scripture description of him, he is said "to abide a priest for ever."

It may be said, in opposition hereunto, 'That the Lord Christ died also, and that no less truly and really than did Aaron, or any priest of his order; wherefore it will not hence follow that he had any more an uninterrupted priesthood than they had.'

Some say the apostle here considers the priesthood of Christ only after his resurrection and ascension into heaven, after which "he dieth no more, death hath no more power over him." And if we will believe the Socinians, then he first began to be a priest. This figment I have fully confuted elsewhere. And there is no ground in the context on which we may conjecture that the apostle

intends the administration of his priesthood in heaven only, although he intends that also; for he speaks of his priesthood as typed by that of Melchisedec, which, as we have proved before, respected the whole of his office.

I say, therefore, that although Christ died, yet he was not forbidden by death to abide in his office, as they were. He died as a priest, they died from, being priests. He died as a priest, because he was also to be a sacrifice; but he abode and continued not only vested with his office, but in the execution of it, in the state of death. Through the indissolubleness of his person, his soul and body still subsisting in the person of the Son of God, he was a capable subject of his office. And his being in the state of the dead belonged unto the administration of his office, no less than his death itself. So that from the first moment of his being a priest he abode so always, without interruption or intermission. This is the meaning of διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτόν, he in his own person abideth. Nor doth the apostle say that he did not die, but only that he "abideth always."

Ἀπαράβατον ἱερωσύνην. 3. It followeth from hence that he hath "an unchangeable priesthood;"—a priesthood subject to no change or alteration, that cannot pass away. But ἱερωσύνη παράβατος, is, "sacerdotium successivum," "per successionem ab uno alteri traditum;"—such a priesthood as which, when one hath attained, it abideth not with him, but he delivereth it over unto another, as Aaron did his unto Eleazar his son, or it falls unto another by some right or law of succession; a priesthood that goes from hand to hand. Ἱερωσύνη ἀπαράβατος, is "a priesthood that doth not pass from one unto another." And this the apostle seems directly to intend, as is evident from the antithesis. The priests after the order of Aaron were many, and that by reason of death: wherefore it was necessary that their priesthood should pass from one to another by succession; so that when one received it, he that went before him ceased to be a priest. And so it was; either the predecessors were taken off by death, or on any other just occasion; as it was in the case of Abiathar, who was put from the priest's office by Solomon, 1 King 2:27. Howbeit our apostle mentions their going off by death only, because that was the ordinary way, and which was provided for in the law. With the Lord Christ it was otherwise. He received his priesthood from none. Although he had sundry types, yet he had no predecessor. And he hath none to succeed him, nor can have added or joined unto him in his office. The whole office of the priesthood of the covenant, and the entire administration of it, are confined unto his person. There are no more that follow him than went before him.

The expositors of the Roman church are greatly perplexed in the reconciling of this passage of the apostle unto the present priesthood of their church. And they may well be so, seeing they are undoubtedly irreconcilable. Some of them say that Peter succeeded unto Christ in his priesthood, as Eleazar did unto Aaron. So Ribera. Some of them deny that he hath any successor, properly so called. "Successorem non habet, nec ita quisquam Catholicus loquitur, si benè et circumspectè loqui velit," saith Estius. But it is openly evident that some of them are not so "circumspect" as Estius would have them, but do plainly affirm that Peter was Christ's successor. A Lapide, indeed, affirms that Peter did not succeed unto Christ as Eleazar did unto Aaron, because Eleazar had the priesthood in the same degree and dignity with Aaron, and so had not Peter with Christ; but yet that he had the same priesthood with him, a priesthood of the same kind, he doth not deny.

That which they generally fix upon is, that their priests have not another priesthood, nor offer another sacrifice, but are partakers of his priesthood, and minister under him; and so are not his successors, but his vicars: which, I think, is the worst composure of this difficulty they could have thought upon; for,—

(1.) This is directly contrary unto the words and design of the apostle. For the reason he assigns why the priesthood of Christ doth not pass from him unto any other, is, because he abides himself for ever to discharge the office of it. Now this excludes all subordination and conjunction, all vicars as well as successors; unless we shall suppose, that although he doth thus abide, yet is he one way or other disenabled to discharge his office.

(2.) The successors of Aaron had no more another priesthood but what he had, than it is pretended that the Roman priests have no other priesthood but what Christ had. Nor did they offer any other sacrifice than what he offered; as these priests pretend to offer the same sacrifice that Christ did. So that still the case is the same between Aaron and his successors, and Christ and his substitutes.

(3.) They say that Christ may have substitutes in his office though he abide a priest still, and although the office still continue the same, unchangeable: so God, in the government of the world, makes use of judges and magistrates, yet is himself the supreme rector of all. But this pretence is vain also. For they do not substitute their priests unto him in that which he continueth to do himself, but in that which he doth not,—which he did, indeed, and as a priest ought to have done, but now ceaseth to do for ever in his own person. For the principal

act of the sacerdotal office of Christ consisted in his oblation, or his "offering himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." This he did once, and ceased for ever from doing so any more. But these priests are assigned to offer him in sacrifice every day, as partakers of the same priesthood with him; which is indeed not to be his substitutes, but his successors; and to take his office out of his hands, as if he were dead, and could henceforth discharge it no more. For they do not appoint priests to intercede in his room, because they grant he continueth himself so to do; but to offer sacrifice in his stead, because he doth so no more. Wherefore, if that be an act of priesthood, and of their priesthood, as is pretended, it is unavoidable that his priesthood is passed from him unto them. Now this is a blasphemous imagination, and directly contrary both unto the words of the apostle and the whole design of his argument. Nay, it would lay the advantage on the other side. For the priests of the order of Aaron had that privilege, that none could take their office upon them, nor officiate in it, whilst they were alive; but although Christ "abideth for ever," yet, according unto the sense of these men, and their practice thereon, he stands in need of others to officiate for him, and that in the principal part of his duty and office; for offer himself in sacrifice unto God he neither now doth nor can, seeing "henceforth he dieth no more." This is the work of the mass-priests alone; who must, therefore, be honoured as Christ's successors, or be abhorred as his murderers, for the sacrifice of him must be by blood and death.

The argument of the apostle, as it is exclusive of this imagination, so it is cogent unto his purpose. For so he proceedeth: That priesthood which changeth not, but is always vested in the same person, and in him alone, is more excellent than that which was subject to change continually from one hand unto another. For that transmission of it from one unto another was an effect of weakness and imperfection. And the Jews grant that the frequency of their change under the second temple was a token of God's displeasure. But thus it was with the priesthood of Christ, which never changeth; and that of Aaron, which was always in a transient succession. And the reasons he gives of this contrary state of these two priesthoods do greatly enforce the argument. For the first priesthood was so successive, because the priests themselves were obnoxious unto death, the sum and issue of all weaknesses and infirmities; but as to the Lord Christ, his priesthood is perpetual and unchangeable, because he abideth personally for ever, being made a priest "according to the power of an endless life," which is the sum of all perfection that our nature is capable of. And we may observe,—

Obs. III. The perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ depends on his own perpetual life.—He did not undertake any office for the church to lay it aside whilst he lives, until the whole design and work of it be accomplished. And therefore he tells his disciples, that "because he liveth they shall live also." John 14:19: for whilst he lives he will take care of them. But this must be spoken unto on the next verse.

Obs. IV. The perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ, as unchangeably exercised in his own person, is a principal part of the glory of that office.—His discharge of this office for the church in his own person, throughout all generations, is the glory of it. 1. Hereon depends the church's preservation and stability. There is neither a ceasing nor any the least intermission of that care and providence, of that interposition with God on its behalf, which are required thereunto. Our high priest in continually ready to appear and put in for us on all occasions. And his abiding for ever manifests the continuance of the same care and love for us that he ever had. The same love wherewith, as our high priest, he laid down his life for us, doth still continue in him. And every one may with the same confidence go unto him with all their concerns, as poor, diseased, and distempered persons went unto him when he was upon earth; when he never showed greater displeasure than unto those who forbade any to come unto him, whatever their pretences were. 2. Hereon depend the union and communion of the church with itself in all successive generations. For whereas he is their head and high priest, in whom they all centre as unto their union and communion, and hath all their graces and duties in his hand, to present them unto God, they have a relation unto each other, and a concernment in one another. We that are alive in this generation have communion with all those that died in the faith before us; as shall be declared, if God will, on chap. 12:22–24. And they were concerned in us, as we are also in the generations that are to come. For all the prayers of the church from first to last are lodged in the hand of the same high priest, who abides for ever; and he returns the prayers of one generation unto another. We enjoy the fruits of the prayers, obedience, and blood of those that went before us; and if we are faithful in our generation, serving the will of God, those shall enjoy the fruits of ours who shall come after us. Our joint interest in this our abiding priest gives a line of communication unto all believers, in all generations. And, 3. The consolation of the church also depends hereon. Do we meet with troubles, trials, difficulties, temptations, and distresses? hath not the church done so in former ages? What do we think of those days wherein prisons, tortures, swords, and flames, were the portion of the

church all the world over? But did any of them miscarry? was any one true believer lost for ever? and did not the whole church prove victorious in the end? Did not Satan rage and the world gnash their teeth to see themselves conquered and their power broken, by the faith, patience, and suffering, of them whom they hated and despised? And was it by their own wisdom and courage that they were so preserved? did they overcome merely by their own blood? or were they delivered by their own power? No; but all their preservation and success, their deliverance and eternal salvation, depended merely on the care and power of their merciful high priest. It was through his blood, "the blood of the Lamb," or the efficacy of his sacrifice, that they "overcame" their adversaries, Rev. 12:11. By the same blood were "their robes washed, and made white," chap. 7:14. From thence had they their righteousness in all their sufferings. And by him had the church its triumphant issue out of all its trials. Now, is he not the same that he ever was, vested with the same office? and hath he not the same qualifications of love, compassion, care, and power, for the discharge of it, as he always had? Whence, then, can any just cause of despondence in any trials or temptations arise? We have the same high priest to take care of us, to assist and help us, as they had, who were all of them finally victorious. 4. This gives perpetual efficacy unto his sacrifice, etc.

Obs. V. The addition of sacrificing priests, as vicars of, or substitutes unto Christ in the discharge of his office, destroys his priesthood as to the principal eminency of it above that of the Levitical priesthood.

Ver. 25.—"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

THIRDLY, In this verse the apostle brings his whole preceding mysterious discourse unto an issue, in the application of it unto the faith and comfort of the church. It was not his design merely to open mysterious truths in the notion of them; nor only to prove the glory and pre-eminence of the gospel church-state above that of the same church under Mosaical institutions, on the account of the priesthood of Christ: but his principal design was, to demonstrate the spiritual and eternal advantages of all true believers by these things. The sum of what he intends he proposeth in this verse, and afterwards enlargeth on unto the end of the chapter. What believers ought to seek in, and what they may expect from this blessed, glorious priesthood, is that which he now undertakes to declare. In like manner, on all occasions he manifests that the end of God, in the whole mystery of his grace by Jesus Christ, and institutions of the gospel, is the salvation of his elect, unto the praise of the glory of his grace.

There are in the words, 1. The illative conjunction, or note of inference, "wherefore." 2. An ascription of power unto this high priest; "he is able." 3. The end of that power, or the effect of it; it is "to save:" which is further described, (1.) By the extent of it; it is "unto the uttermost:" (2.) The especial object of it; "those that come to God by him." 4. The reasons of the whole: which are, (1.) His perpetual life: (2.) His perpetual work; "he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Ὅθεν. First, The note of inference, ὅθεν, is frequently made use of by our apostle in this argumentative discourse, as chap. 2:17, 3:1, 8:3, 9:18, 11:19, and in this place; "ideo," "quapropter." Nor is it anywhere else in the New Testament used for the introduction of a conclusion or inference from premises in a way of argument. And the causality which here it includes may respect the whole foregoing discourse, as asserting that which necessarily follows thereon: or it may have respect only unto the ensuing clause in this verse; as if the apostle had only intended in particular, that the Lord Christ is "able to save to the uttermost, because he ever liveth." But he rather seems to make an inference from the whole foregoing discourse, and the close of the verse is only an addition of the way and manner how the Lord Christ accomplished what is ascribed unto him by virtue of his office: 'Being such an high priest as we have evidenced him to be, "made by an oath," and "abiding for ever," he is "able to save." '

Obs. VI. Considerations of the person and offices of Christ ought to be improved unto the strengthening of the faith, and increase of the consolation of the church.—So they are here by the apostle. After the great and ample declaration that he had made of the excellency of his priestly office with respect unto his person, he applies all that he had spoken unto the encouragement of the faith and hope of them that endeavour to go to God by him. And all those who explode such considerations, and such improvements of them, are no otherwise to be looked on but as persons utterly ignorant both of Christ and faith in him.

Δύναται. Secondly, That which is inferred to be in this priest, is power and ability. Δύναται,—"He is able;" "he can." This is the second time the apostle ascribeth power or ability unto this priest. See chap. 2:18, and the exposition thereof. And it is not an ability of nature, but of office, that is intended. An ability of nature in Christ he had proved sufficiently in the first chapter of the epistle, and that accompanied with supreme power, or authority over all; but

whereas, as our mediator, he hath undertaken such offices for us, he is, as such, able to do no more than he is so by virtue of them, or in the discharge of those offices. If, therefore, there be any thing needful for us, which, although it may be supposed within the compass of the divine power of the Son of God, is yet not to be effected in a way of office; that, as our mediator, he is not able for. Hence doth our apostle press his ability not absolutely, but as the high priest of the church. As, if a man who is mighty in wealth, riches, and power, be also made a judge, it is one thing what he can do by his might and power, another what he is able for and can do as a judge; and he who hath to deal with him as a judge, is to consider only what he is able for in the discharge of that office. And he doth this partly to evince his pre-eminence above the high priests of the law. For by reason of their personal infirmities, and the limited nature of their office, they were really unable to effect many things which the church stood in need of from those that discharged that office, supposing them the only way of our approach unto God. Were they never so ready, willing, diligent, and watchful, yet they were not able to do all that was necessary for the church. Being themselves sinful men, made priests by the law of a carnal commandment, and subject unto death, they had no ability to effect in the church what is expected from the priestly office. But the Lord Christ, our high priest, being free from all these imperfections, as he is a priest, "he is able." But principally he insists upon it to encourage and confirm the faith of the church in him with respect unto this office. Wherefore, having by many demonstrations assured us of his love and compassion, chap. 2 and chap. 5, there remains nothing but to satisfy us also of his power and ability. And this he hath now evinced, from the nature and dignity of his office, as vested in his person. This is the ability here intended; not an absolute divine power, inherent in the person of Christ, but a moral power, —a "jus," a right; and what can be effected in the just discharge of this office. And hereon,—

Obs. VII. The consideration of the office-power of Christ is of great use unto the faith of the church. To this end we may observe,—

1. That the foundation of all the benefits which are received by Christ,—that is, of the spiritual and eternal salvation of the church,—is laid in his condescending to undertake the office of a mediator between God and man. And as this was the greatest effect of divine wisdom and grace, so it is the first cause, the root and spring, of all spiritual blessings unto us. This the whole Scripture beareth testimony unto, Heb. 10:7; 1 John 3:16. This is the fundamental article of faith evangelical. And the want of laying this foundation aright, as it

occasioneth many to apostatize from the gospel unto a natural religion, so it weakeneth and disordereth the faith of many believers. But this is the first ground of all friendship between God and man.

2. Having undertaken that office, all the actings of it for us and towards us, or towards God in our behalf, are circumscribed and limited by that office. We have no ground of faith to expect any thing from him or by him but what belongs unto the office that he hath undertaken. Neither are we, in our addresses unto him and expectations from him, to consider him absolutely as God, the eternal Son of God only, but as the mediator between God and man. We can look for no more from a king but what he can justly do as a king, nor from any other person in office; no more are we to look for from Christ himself.

3. This office of Christ in general, as the mediator and sponsor of the new covenant, is distinguished into three especial offices, of a king, a prophet, and a priest. Whatever, therefore, we receive from Christ, or by him, we do it as he acts in that threefold capacity, or in one of those offices, a king, a priest, or a prophet. Whatever he hath done for us, or continueth to do, whatever he doth over us, for us, or towards us, he doth it in and under one of these capacities; for unto them may all his office-relation unto us be reduced. And the kindness of all those other relations wherein he stands unto us,—as of a shepherd, the bishop of our souls, of an husband, of a brother, a friend,—he puts forth and exerciseth in the acts and actings of these offices.

4. All these offices, whether vested jointly in any one other person, or severally and distinctly in several persons, as they were under the old testament, could never extend their acts and effects unto all the occasions and necessities of the church. The business of our apostle, in this chapter, is to prove that the office of the priesthood as vested in Aaron and his successors made nothing perfect, did not consummate the church-state, nor could effect its salvation. The kingly office, as it was typically managed by David and others, was remote from answering that rule and safety which the church stood in need of. Neither did nor could any one prophet, no, nor yet all the prophets together, reveal and declare the whole counsel of God. But,—

5. These offices as they were in Christ did perfectly answer, and yet do, all that belongs to the redemption, sanctification, protection, and salvation, of the church. And this they do on two accounts:—

(1.) Because they were committed unto him in a more full, ample, and unlimited manner, than either they were or could be unto others, on purpose that they might answer all the ends of God's grace towards the church. So, as he was made a king, not this or that degree or enlargement of power was committed unto him, but "all power in heaven and in earth," over all the creation of God, in all things, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. See our description and delineation of this power, on chap. 1:2, 3. As a prophet, he did not receive this or that particular revelation from God, but "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were laid up in him," and he knew the whole mind and counsel of God, as coming forth from his divine bosom. And as unto his sacerdotal office, we are now engaged in an inquiry into its especial nature, as differing from, and exalted above, whatever was committed unto any of the sons of men under that name.

(2.) The principal reason of the all-sufficiency of the office-power and ability of Christ is taken from his own person, which alone was capable of a trust of such a power, and able to execute it unto all the ends of it. He alone, who was God and man in one person, was capable of being such a king, priest, and prophet, as was able to save the church unto the uttermost.

Wherefore, in the consideration of this office-power of Christ, wherein all our salvation doth depend, we have two things to attend unto: (1.) His person who bears these offices, and who alone is fit and able so to do; and, (2.) The especial nature of the office as committed unto him. On these grounds he was able to do infinitely more as a priest than all the priests of the order of Aaron could do. So the apostle expresseth it in the next words.

Καὶ σώζειν. Thirdly, "He is able to save;" καὶ σώζειν,—"even to save," "to save also;" not for this or that particular end, but absolutely,—"even to save." The general sense of this word is limited and determined in the use and application of it throughout the Scripture. Not any temporal deliverances, but that which is supernatural, spiritual, and eternal, is intended thereby. And,—

1. The notion of the word includeth in it a supposition of some evil or danger that we are delivered from. This is sin, with its consequents of misery, in the curse of the law and the wrath to come. Wherefore it is said of Christ, that "he saves his people from their sins," Matt. 1:21; "from the curse," Gal. 3:13; and "from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. 1:10. In these things all that is or can be evil unto our nature, here or unto eternity, are included.

2. The bringing of us into an estate of present grace and right unto future blessedness, with the enjoyment of it in its appointed season, is intended in it; for although this be not included in the first notion of the word, yet it belongs unto the nature of the thing intended.

This salvation, called therefore "great" and "eternal salvation," doth not merely respect the evil we are delivered from, but the contrary good also, in the present favour and future enjoyment of God. And concerning this salvation two things are to be considered:—

1. That there is power and ability required unto this work: "he is able to save." It was no easy thing to take away sin, to subdue Satan, to fulfil the law, to make peace with God, to procure pardon, to purchase grace and glory, with all other things great and glorious, that belong unto this salvation. And it is the great concernment of faith well to fix this principle, that he who hath undertaken this work is able to accomplish it, and that by the means he hath designed to use, and the way wherein he will proceed. We are apt to pass this over without any inquiry into it, and to take it for granted that God is able to do whatever he pleaseth; but it is not of the absolute power of God whereof we speak, but of the power of God, or of Christ, put forth in such a peculiar way. And the want of faith herein is the first and most proper part of unbelief. Wherefore, as God engageth his omnipotency, or all-sufficiency, as the foundation of all his covenant actings towards us, Gen. 17:1; so he often pleadeth the same power to assure us of the accomplishment of his promises, Isa. 40:28, 29. And it is expressly asserted as the principal ground of faith, Rom. 4:21, 11:23; 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24; and often in this epistle.

2. It is here supposed that the discharge of Christ's priestly office is the way designed to save us by, or to effect this great work of salvation. No other way or means is appointed of God unto this end. Here we must look for it, or go without it. Wherefore the inquiry is necessary, whether, in the discharge of this office, and within the bounds and limits of it, he be able to save us with this salvation. For indeed many are like those "sons of Belial" who said of Saul, when God had anointed him king, "How shall this man save us? and despised him," 1 Sam. 10:27. They understand not how Christ is able to save them by his priesthood; and therefore, under various pretences, they trust to themselves, and despise him. All false religion is but a choice of other things for men to place their trust in, with a neglect of Christ. And all superstition grows on the same root, in all effects or instances of it, be they great or small. Wherefore I say, we

are to consider whether this office, and the acts of it, be suited and meet for the effecting of all things that belong to this salvation. For if we find them not so, we cannot believe that he is a priest able to save us. But they evidence themselves to be otherwise, unless our minds are darkened by the power of unbelief; as we shall see in the particulars afterwards insisted on by our apostle. And we are here taught, that,—

Obs. VIII. It is good to secure this first ground of evangelical faith, that the Lord Christ, as vested with his offices, and in the exercise of them, is able to save us.

Salvation is that which all sinners, who have fallen under any convictions, do seek after. And it is from God they look for it. He alone, they know, can save them; and unless he do so, they cannot be saved. And that he can do so, they seem for a while to make no question, although they greatly doubt whether he will or no. Here, under these general apprehensions of the power of God, they cannot long abide, but must proceed to inquire into the way whereby he will save them, if ever they be saved. And this the whole Scripture testifieth to be no otherwise but by Jesus Christ. For "there is no salvation in any other; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved," Acts 4:12. When their thoughts are thus limited unto Christ alone, their next inquiry is, "How shall this man save us?" And hereon are they directed unto his offices, especially his priesthood, whereby he undertakes to deliver them from the guilt of their sins, and to bring them into favour with God. Is it not therefore highly incumbent on them to satisfy themselves herein, that Christ is able to save them in the exercise of this office? for if he be not, there is no salvation to be obtained. And when men are come thus far, as that they will not question in general but that the Lord Christ, in the discharge of his sacerdotal office, is able to save sinners in general, yet unbelief will keep them off from acquiescing in this power of his, as so limited, for their own salvation. As Naaman had thoughts in general that Elisha could cure men of their leprosy, yet he would not believe that he could cure them in the way and by the means he prescribed. He thought he would have taken another course with him, more suited unto his apprehensions, as a means for his recovery. Hereon he turns away in a rage; which if he had not by good advice been recalled from, he had lived and died under the plague of his leprosy, 2 Kings 5:10–14. When persons are reduced to look for salvation only by Christ, and do apprehend in general that he can save sinners, yet ofttimes, when they come to inquire into the way and manner of it, by the exercise of his priestly office, they cannot close with it.

Away they turn again into themselves; from which if they are not recovered, they must die in their sins. Unless, therefore, we do well and distinctly fix this foundation of faith, that Christ as a priest is able to save us, or is able to do so in the discharge of his sacerdotal office, we shall never make one firm step in our progress. To this end we must consider,—

That the Lord Christ as mediator, and in the discharge of his office, is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." So saith our apostle, "Christ crucified is, to them that believe, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:23, 24. His death is both an effect of divine power and wisdom; and thereby do they exert their efficacy unto the utmost, for the attaining of the end designed in it. Wherefore we are to look unto this priesthood of Christ, as that which divine wisdom hath appointed as the only way and means whereby we may be saved. And if there be any defect therein,—if Christ, in the discharge of it, be not able to save us, notwithstanding the difficulties which unto us seem insuperable,—it must be charged on divine wisdom, as that which was wanting in the contrivance of a due means unto its end. And so it is done by the world; for the apostle testifieth that this "wisdom of God" is looked on and esteemed by men as mere "foolishness." The way proposed in it, to save sinners by the cross of Christ, is accounted as folly by all unbelievers, whatever else they pretend as the reason of their unbelief. But this faith is to fix upon; namely, that although we yet see not how it may be done, nor have the experience of it in our own souls, yet this being the way which infinite wisdom hath fixed on, there is no defect in it, but Christ by it is able to save us. For the very first notion which we have of wisdom as divine and infinite, is, that we are to acquiesce in its contrivances and determinations, though we cannot comprehend the reasons or ways of them. Besides, the Lord Christ is herein also "the power of God." God in him and by him puts forth his omnipotent power for the accomplishing of the effect and end aimed at. Wherefore, although we are not to look for our salvation from the power of God absolutely considered, yet are we to look for it from the same omnipotency as acting itself in and by Jesus Christ. This is the way whereby infinite wisdom hath chosen to act omnipotent power; and into them is faith herein to be resolved.

Εἰς τὸ παντελές. 1. He is able to save also εἰς τὸ παντελές. The word may have a double sense; for it may respect the perfection of the work, or its duration: and so it is variously rendered; "to the uttermost," that is, completely; or "evermore," that is, "always" or "for ever." So the Syriac translation carries it.

Take the word in the first sense, and the meaning is, that he will not effect or work out this or that part of our salvation, do one thing or another that belongs unto it, and leave what remains unto ourselves or others; but "he is our Rock, and his work is perfect." Whatever belongs unto our entire, complete salvation, he is able to effect it. The general notion of the most that are called Christians lies directly against this truth. In the latter sense two things may be intended: (1.) That after an entrance is made into this work, and men begin to be made partakers of deliverance thereby, there may great oppositions be made against it, in temptations, trials, sins, and death, before it be brought unto perfection; but our Lord Christ, as our faithful high priest, fainteth not in his work, but is able to carry us through all these difficulties, and will do so, until it be finished for ever in heaven. (2.) That this salvation is durable, perpetual, eternal, Isa. 45:17. "Salvare in æternum;" to procure "salutem æternam." But "favores sunt ampliandi," and there is nothing hinders but that we may take the words in such a comprehensive sense as to include the meaning of both these interpretations. He is able to save completely as to all parts, fully as to all causes, and for ever in duration. And we may observe,—

Obs. IX. Whatever hinderances and difficulties lie in the way of the salvation of believers, whatever oppositions do rise against it, the Lord Christ is able, by virtue of his sacerdotal office, and in the exercise of it, to carry the work through them all unto eternal perfection.

In the assertion of the ability of Christ in this matter, there is a supposition of a work whereunto great power and efficacy is required; and whereas it is emphatically affirmed, that "he is able to save unto the uttermost," it is supposed that great oppositions and difficulties do lie in the way of its accomplishment. But these things are commonly spoken unto by our practical divines, and I shall not therefore insist upon them.

2. The whole is further declared by instancing in those who are to be saved, or made partakers of this salvation. "He is able to save to the uttermost," but yet all are not to be saved by him; yea, they are but few that are so. Of the most it may be said, "They will not come unto him that they may have life." Wherefore those whom he is thus able to save, and doth save accordingly, are all those, and only those, "who come unto God by him."

To "come to God" hath a double sense in the Scripture; for it is sometimes expressive of faith, sometimes of worship.

Τοὺς προσερχομένους. (1.) To come to God, is to believe. Faith or believing is a coming to God. So Christ calling us unto faith in him, calleth us to come unto him, Matt. 11:28. And unbelief is a refusal to come to him, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." Faith in God through him, is coming to the Father by him, John 14:6; so to come to God by Christ, is through him to believe in God, 1 Pet. 1:21.

(2.) Our access unto God in his worship, is our coming unto him. So is it most frequently expressed in the Old Testament,—"Drawing nigh unto God." And the expression is taken from the approach that was made unto the tabernacle in and with all holy services. Worship is an approximation unto God, Ps. 73:28, קִרְבַת אֱלֹהִים. So our apostle calls those who worshipped God in the ordinances of the law, τοὺς προσερχομένους, Heb. 10:1,—the "comers," the worshippers; not those that come to the worship, but those who by that worship come to God. In answer hereunto, our evangelical worship is προσαγωγή,—an "access," an approximation, a drawing nigh or coming to God, Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:22.

The latter sense is principally here intended; for the discourse of the apostle is concerning the state of the church under the new testament, with the advantage of it above that of old, by its relation unto the priesthood of Christ. They came of old to God with their worship by the high priest of the law; but those high priests could not save them in any sense. But the high priest of the new testament can "save to the uttermost" all gospel worshippers,—"all that come to God by him." But the former sense of the word is also included and supposed herein. They that come unto God by Christ, are such as, believing in him, do give up themselves in holy obedience to worship God in and by him.

Δι᾽ αὐτοῦ. So is the way expressed of this coming unto God, δι᾽ αὐτοῦ,—that is, "by him" as a high priest; as it is at large explained by the apostle, Heb. 10:19–22.

Now, to come unto God by Jesus Christ in all holy worship, so as thereon to be interested in his saving power as the high priest of the church, is so to come, (1.) In obedience unto his authority, as to the way and manner of it; (2.) With affiance in his mediation, as to the acceptance of it; (3.) With faith in his person, as the foundation of it.

(1.) It is to come in obedience unto his authority, and that on a double account: [1.] Of the way of coming. It is not by legal institutions, it is only by our own inventions; it is only by his appointment, Matt. 28:20. To come to God

any other way, gives us no interest in the care or saving power of Christ, John 15:7, 8. [2.] Of that especial respect which we have in our souls and consciences unto his sovereign rule over us.

(2.) With affiance in his mediation. And therein faith hath respect unto two things: [1.] The sacrifice he hath offered, the atonement and reconciliation he hath made for us, whereon our whole liberty of access unto God doth depend, Heb. 10:19–22. [2.] To his intercession, whereby he procures actual acceptance for our persons and our duties, Heb. 4:16: 1 John 2:1.

(3.) The foundation of the whole is faith in his person as vested with his holy office, and in the discharge of it. It is so to believe in him, as to believe that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." This is the ground whereon in our holy worship we assemble in his name, Matt. 18:20; and make all our supplications unto God in his name, John 16:26;—that is, by an exercise of faith and trust in him, that by and through him we shall be accepted with God. And we may hence observe,—

Obs. X. The salvation of all sincere gospel worshippers is secured by the actings of the Lord Christ in the discharge of his priestly office.

Obs. XI. Attendance unto the service, the worship of God in the gospel, is required to interest us in the saving care and power of our high priest.—Men deceive themselves, who look to be saved by him, but take no care to come to God in holy worship by him. Nor is it an easy or common thing so to do. All men pretend unto divine worship, some one way, some another, and in words they interpose the name of Christ therein; but really to come to God by him is a matter of another import. Two things are indispensably required thereunto: (1.) That the principle of saving faith be antecedent unto it; (2.) That the exercise of faith be concomitant with it. Unless we are true believers, our worship will not be accepted; and unless we are in the exercise of faith on God through Christ in the performance of it, it gives no glory to him, it brings no advantage unto ourselves.

Obs. XII. Those who endeavour to come unto God any other way but by Christ, as by saints and angels, may do well to consider whether they have any such office in heaven as by virtue whereof they are able to save them to the uttermost.—That this is done by those of the Roman church, cannot with any modesty be denied; yea, it is avowed by them. For when they are charged with the wickedness of their doctrine and practice in this matter, evacuating the mediation of Christ, they reply, that they admit of no mediators of

reconciliation with God, but only of intercession. Be it so. Ability to save to the utmost is here ascribed unto our high priest upon the account of his intercession. A respect unto his oblation, whereby he made reconciliation, is included; but it is the efficacy of his intercession that is expressly regarded: for being "reconciled by his death, we shall be saved by his life," Rom. 5:10. He, therefore, alone is the mediator of intercession, who is able, by virtue of his office, to save us to the utmost, through that intercession of his.

Those by whom they choose to go to God are able to save them, or they are not. If they are not, is it not the greatest folly and madness imaginable, whilst we seek after salvation, to set Him aside on any occasion, in any one instance, who can save us to the utmost, and betake ourselves unto them who cannot save us at all? If they are able to save us in any sense, it is either by virtue of some office and office-power that they are invested withal in heaven, (as ministers are, in the discharge of their office, said to "save them that hear them," 1 Tim. 4:16; that is, ministerially and instrumentally,) or without any such office. If they can do so without any office, they can do more than Jesus Christ can do; for he is able to do it by virtue of his office only. And if it might have been otherwise, what need was there that Christ should undertake and discharge this office of the priesthood, and that our apostle should so labour to prove the excellency of this his office, only to satisfy us that he is able to save them that come to God by him? If they do it by virtue of any office committed to them, let it be named what it is. Are they priests in heaven for ever after the order of Melchisedec? Dishonour enough is done unto Christ, by making any sacrificing priests on the earth, as they do in their mass; but to make interceding priests in heaven also, is the highest reproach unto him. Or are they the kings or prophets of the church? or under what name or title is this power intrusted with them? Such imaginations are most foreign from true Christian religion. A holy, painful minister on the earth can do much more towards the saving of the souls of men, than any saint or angel in heaven. For the work of doing it ministerially, by the dispensation of the word, is committed unto them in the way of office; but office in the church beareth none in heaven, but only Jesus Christ.

And what is the reason why men should so readily close with other means, other mediators of intercession, to go to God by them? For when they pray to saints, although they should only pray unto them to intercede for them, as some of them pretend, (however openly and manifestly against their express and avowed practice,) yet do they go to God by them. For to speak of any religious prayer, and yet not to look on it in general as a going or coming to God, is a

fond and senseless imagination. Wherefore, whenever they pray to saints,—as most of them do more than to Jesus Christ,—their design is to go to God by them. But what is it that should induce them hereunto? Our Lord Christ hath told us that "he is the way;" and that "no man cometh unto the Father but by him," John 14:6. What reason can any man give why he should not believe him, but, although he hath said that "no man cometh unto the Father but by him," should yet attempt to go another way? Have others more power in these things than he, so as it is advisable on that account to make our application unto them? Where is it said of any saints or angels, or all of them together, that they are able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by them? or where is any one word spoken of their power or interest in heaven unto that purpose? But it will be said, 'That we may be relieved and saved, we stand not in need of power only, but of love, pity, and compassion: and although the saints have less ability than Christ, yet they may have more of love and compassion for us. For some of them, it may be, were our kindred, or progenitors, or countrymen, or such as may have an especial kindness for us: especially the blessed Virgin, and other female saints, are, by their natural constitution as well as their grace,' (who would not think so?) 'mightily inclined unto pity and compassion.' And indeed they are marvellous things which some of them tell us concerning the blessed Virgin in this case, and her condescension in the pursuit of her love and pity. But yet this imagination is the highest pitch of folly and ingratitude. Certainly nothing can more stir up the indignation of God, than to have any creatures in heaven or earth, or all together, equalled in love and compassion to Jesus Christ. He that doth not know that there is an unparalleled eminency of these in him, who is not in some measure instructed in the cause and effect of them, knows no more of the gospel than a Jew. There is more love, pity, and compassion, in Christ Jesus, towards every poor sinner that comes unto God by him, than all the saints in heaven are able to comprehend. And if kindred or alliance may be of consideration in this matter, he is more nearly related unto us than father or mother, or wife or children, or all together; we being not only "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh," but so joined to him as to be "one spirit" with him.

But it will yet be said, 'That it is on none of these considerations that men choose to go unto God by other mediators of intercession; only whereas the Lord Christ is so great, and so gloriously exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, they dare not always presumptuously intrude into his glorious presence; and therefore they make use of the saints, who are more cognate unto us, and not clothed with such terrible majesty. And in going unto God by the

friends of Christ, they please him as well as if they went immediately by himself.' Ans. (1.) He is an unbeliever, unto whom the glorious exaltation of the Lord Christ is a discouragement from going unto him, or by him unto God on the throne of grace. For all the glory, power, and majesty of Christ in heaven, are proposed unto believers, to encourage them to come unto him, and to put their trust in him. But this is the talk of men who, whatever devotion they pretend unto, indeed know nothing really of what it is to pray, to believe, to trust in Christ, or by him to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace. See Heb. 4:14–16. (2.) All the glory, power, and majesty of Jesus Christ, as exalted in heaven as our mediator, are but means effectually to exert and exercise his love and compassion towards us: "He liveth for ever to make intercession for us." But we proceed.

Fourthly, The close of this verse gives us the special reasons and confirmation of all the efficacy that the apostle hath assigned unto the priesthood of Christ: Πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν,—"Always living to make intercession for them." And three things must he considered in these words:—

1. The state and condition of Christ as a high priest: "he liveth always," or "for ever." 2. What he doth as a high priest in that state and condition: he "maketh intercession for us." 3. The connection of these things, their mutual regard, or the relation of the work of Christ unto his state and condition; the one is the end of the other: "he liveth for ever to make intercession for us."

Πάντοτε ζῶν. First, As to his state and condition, "he liveth for ever." He is always living. The Lord Christ, in his divine person, hath a threefold life in heaven. The one he lives in himself; the other for himself; and the last for us.

1. The eternal life of God in his divine nature. This he liveth in himself: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself," John 5:26. He hath given it him by eternal generation, in a communication unto him of all the divine properties. And he that hath "life in himself," a life independent on any other, he is the "living one," the "living God." No creature can have life in himself; for "in God we live, and move, and have our being." He is hereby "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,"—the beginning and end of all, Rev. 1:11; because he is ὁ ζῶν, the "living one," verse 18. And this life of Christ is the foundation of the efficacy of all his mediatory actings, namely, that he was, in his own divine person, the living God, Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 John 3:16. But this is not the immediate cause of his mediatory effects, nor is it here intended.

2. There is a life which he liveth for himself; namely, a life of inconceivable glory in his human nature. He led a mortal life in this world, a life obnoxious unto misery and death, and died accordingly. This life is now changed into that of immortal, eternal glory. "Henceforth he dieth no more, death hath no more power over him." And not only so, but this life of his is unto him the cause of, and is attended with, all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself; it is his reward, the glory and honour that he is crowned withal. All the endowments, all the enjoyments, and the whole eternal exaltation of the human nature in the person of Christ, belong unto this life of glory. And the glorious exaltation of that individual human nature which the Son of God assumed, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, in this world, or the world to come, is the principal part of the design of infinite wisdom in the work of the new creation. But neither is this life here intended.

3. The Lord Christ lives a mediatory life in heaven, a life for us. So saith our apostle, he was made a "priest after the power of an endless life;" whereof we have treated before. He lives as king, prophet, and priest, of the church. So he describes himself, Rev. 1:18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." As he died for us, so he liveth for us; and is intrusted with all power over the church's adversaries, for its good. As he died for us, so he liveth for us in heaven; and therefore he tells us, that "because he liveth we shall live also," John 14:19. Now this life differeth not essentially from that life of glory in the human nature which he liveth for himself in heaven; only it denoteth one especial end of it, and that only for a season. The Lord Christ will have the life in himself, the divine life, unto all eternity; and so also will he have the life of glory in the human nature; but he shall cease to live this mediatory life for us when the work of his mediation is accomplished, 1 Cor. 15:28; but he shall lead this life always for us, until the whole work committed unto him be accomplished, and shall lead it as a life of glory in himself unto eternity.

Obs. XIII. It is a matter of strong consolation unto the church, that Christ lives in heaven for us.

It is a spring of unspeakable joy unto all true believers, that he lives a life of immortality and glory in and for himself in heaven. Who can call to mind all the miseries which he underwent in this world, all the reproach and scorn that was cast upon him by his enemies of all sorts, all the wrath that the whole world

is yet filled withal against him, and not be refreshed, rejoiced, transported, with a spiritual view by faith of all that majesty and glory which he is now in the eternal possession of? So was it with Stephen, Acts. 7:56. And therefore, in all the appearances and representations which he hath made of himself since his ascension into heaven, he hath manifested his present glory, Acts 26:13; Rev. 1:13–18. And the due consideration hereof cannot but be a matter of unspeakable refreshment unto all that love him in sincerity.

Secondly, But herein lieth the life of the church's consolation, that he continues to live a mediatory life in heaven for us also. It is not, I fear, so considered nor so improved as it ought to be. That Christ died for us, all who own the gospel profess in words; though some so explain their faith, or rather their infidelity, as to deny its proper use, and to evacuate its proper ends. That so he lived for us here in this world, as that his life was some way or other unto our advantage, at least thus far, that he could not have died if he had not lived before, all men will grant, even those by whom the principal end of this life, namely, to fulfil the law for us, is peremptorily denied; but that Christ now lives a life of glory in heaven, that most men think is for himself alone. But the text speaks to the contrary: "He liveth for ever to make intercession for us." Neither is this the only end of his present mediatory life in heaven, though this only be here expressed. Should I undertake to show the ends of the present mediatory life of Christ for the church, it would be too great and long a decursion from the text. However, the whole of the work of this life of his may be reduced into these three heads: 1. His immediate actings towards the church itself, which respects his prophetical office. 2. His actings for the church in the world, by virtue and power of his kingly office. 3. His actings with God the Father in their behalf, in the discharge of his sacerdotal office.

1. The first consisteth in his sending and giving the Holy Ghost unto the church. He lives for ever to send the Holy Spirit unto his disciples. Without this constant effect of the present mediatory life of Christ the being of the church would fail, it could not subsist one moment. For hereon depends, (1.) All saving light to understand the word of God, or spiritual things in a spiritual manner; wherein he continueth the exercise of his prophetical office: (2.) All habitual grace, whereby the souls of the elect are quickened and regenerated: (3.) All supplies of actual grace; which the whole church hath from him every moment, and without which it could yield no obedience unto God: (4.) All spiritual gifts, the sole foundation and means of the church's edification, and without which it

can have no real benefit by any gospel ordinances or administrations: (5.) All comfort and all consolation, which in all variety of occurrences the church doth stand in need of: which things I have elsewhere spoken unto at large.

2. His actings by virtue of his mediatory life for the church in the world are also various; wherein he exerciseth his kingly power, that power which is given unto him as he is "head over all things unto the church," Eph. 1:22. Hence is the whole preservation of the church in this world by glorious effects of divine wisdom and power. Hence doth proceed the present controls that are given unto its adversaries. And hence will proceed their future destruction; for he must reign until all his enemies be made his footstool. In the exercise of this life, wherein the keys of hell and of death are committed unto him, doth he put forth his mighty power over the world, Satan, death, the grave, and hell, for the eternal security and salvation of the church. Did he not live this life for us in heaven, neither the whole church nor any one member of it could be preserved one moment from utter ruin. But hereby are all their adversaries continually disappointed.

Ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν. 3. By virtue of this life he acts with God on the behalf of the church. And the only way whereby he doth this, in the discharge of his priestly office, is expressed here in the text, "He liveth for ever to make intercession for them." Now this expression containing the whole of what the Lord Christ, as the high priest of the church, doth now with God for them, and whereon the certainty of our salvation doth depend, it must with some diligence be inquired into.

Expositors, especially those of the Roman church, inquire with many disputes into the external form of the intercession of Christ, as namely, whether it be oral and vocal, or no. And they produce many testimonies out of the ancients upon the one side and the other. And great weight is laid by some on the difference and determination of it. For whereas Ribera grants that the dispute is more about words and the manner of expression, than the matter itself; Tena affirms that what he says is most false. And it is evident that the testimonies produced by themselves out of the ancients, as Chrysostom, Theophylact, Ambrose, Austin, and so to Rupertus and Thomas, are expressly contradictory to one another. Now, although our principal concernment lieth in the internal form and efficacy of the intercession of our high priest, rather than in the outward manner of it, yet, so far as that also is revealed, we may

inquire into it. And we shall find that the true stating of it tends unto the encouragement and establishment of our faith. And the things ensuing may be observed unto this purpose:—

(1.) The Socinian figment about the nature of the intercession of Christ is of no consideration; for, by a strange violence offered unto the nature of things, and the signification of words, they contend that this intercession is nothing but the power of Christ to communicate actually all good things, the whole effect of his mediation, unto believers. That Christ hath such a power is no way questioned; but that this power in the exercise of it is his intercession, is a most fond imagination. That which casts them on this absurd conception of things, is their hatred of the priestly office of Christ, as exercised towards God on our behalf. But I have elsewhere sufficiently disputed against this fiction.

(2.) The intercession of Christ was under the old testament typed out three ways: [1.] By the living fire that was continually on the altar. Herewith were all sacrifices to be kindled and burned; which thence were called אִשִּׁים, "firings." But this principally typified his prayers, when he "offered himself unto God through the eternal Spirit;" which he did with "strong cries and supplications," or "intercessions," Heb. 5:7. Hereby, and the actings of the eternal Spirit therein, he kindled and fired in himself a "sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour," Eph. 5:2. [2.] By the תָּמִיד, or "daily sacrifice" of morning and evening for the whole people. See the institution of it, Exod. 29:38–42. For although that sacrifice had in it the nature of an expiatory oblation, because it was by blood, yet the principal end of it was to make continual application of the great, solemn, annual expiation, unto the consciences of the people. [3.] By the incense that was burned in the sanctuary. And this was of two sorts: 1st. That wherewith the high priest entered once a-year into the most holy place, on the day of expiation. For he might not enter in, yea, he was to die if he did, unless in his entrance he filled the place and covered the ark and mercy-seat with a cloud of incense, Lev. 16:12, 13;—which incense was to be fired with burning coals from the altar of burnt-offerings. So did our high priest: he filled heaven at his entrance with the sweet savour of his intercession, kindled with the coals of that eternal Fire wherewith he offered himself unto God. 2dly. The incense that was burned every day in the sanctuary by the priests in their courses. This represented prayer, Ps. 141:2; and was always accompanied with it, Luke 1:9, 10. This also was a type of the continual efficacy of the intercession of Christ, Rev. 8:4. But the former was the most solemn representation of it. In that anniversary sacrifice, whereof we must treat afterwards at large, there was

atonement made for all the sins and transgressions of the people, Lev. 16:21. And it was consummated by carrying some of the blood, as a representation of it, into the most holy place, sprinkling it before the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat. This was done but once in the year. To keep this in remembrance, and to make application of the benefits of it unto the consciences of the worshippers, the daily sacrifice was appointed. So doth the intercession of Christ make continual application of his great sacrifice and atonement, whence it derives its efficacy. And as the fire on the altar kindled all the renewed sacrifices, which were to be repeated and multiplied, because of their weakness and imperfection; so doth the intercession of Christ make effectual the one perfect sacrifice which he offered once for all, in the various applications of it unto the consciences of believers, Heb. 10:2.

(3.) The actual intercession of Christ in heaven, as the second act of his sacerdotal office, is a fundamental article of our faith, and a principal foundation of the church's consolation. So is it asserted to be, 1 John 2:1, 2. And it is expressed by our apostle as that whereby the death of Christ is made effectual unto us, Rom. 8:34; for it compriseth the whole care and all the actings of Christ, as our high priest, with God in the behalf of the church. This, therefore, is the immediate spring of all gracious communications unto us. For hereby doth he act his own care, love, and compassion; and from thence do we receive all mercy, all supplies of grace and consolation needful unto our duties, temptations, and trials. Hereon depends all our encouragement to make our application unto God, to come with boldness of faith unto the throne of grace, Heb. 4:15, 16, 10:21, 22. Wherefore, whatever apprehensions we may attain of the manner of it, the thing itself is the centre of our faith, hope, and consolation.

(4.) It is no way unworthy or unbecoming the human nature of Christ, in its glorious exaltation, to pray unto God. It was in and by the human nature that the Lord Christ exercised and executed all the duties of his offices whilst he was on earth; and he continueth to discharge what remains of them in the same nature still. And however that nature be glorified, it is the same essentially that it was when he was in this world. To ascribe another kind of nature unto him, under pretence of a more divine glory, is to deny his being, and to substitute a fancy of our own in his room. So, then, the human nature of Christ, however exalted and glorified, is human nature still, subsisting in dependence on God and subjection unto him. Hence God gives him new revelations now, in his glorified condition, Rev. 1:1. With respect hereunto he acted of old as the angel of the covenant, with express prayers for the church, Zech. 1:12, 13. So the

command given him to intercede by the way of petition, request, or prayer, Ps. 2:8, "Ask of me," respects his state of exaltation at the right hand of God, when he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," Ps. 2:7, 8; Rom. 1:4. And the incense which he offereth with the prayers of the saints, Rev. 8:3, 4, is no other but his own intercession, whereby their prayers are made acceptable unto God.

(5.) This praying of Christ at present is no other but such as may become him who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There must, therefore, needs be a great difference, as to the outward manner, between his present intercession in heaven and his praying whilst he was on the earth, especially at some seasons. For being encompassed here with temptations and difficulties, he cast himself at the feet of God, with "strong cries, tears, and supplications," Heb. 5:7. This would not become his present glorious state; nor is he liable or exposed unto any of the causes or occasions of that kind of treating with God. And yet at another time whilst he was in this world, he gave us the best estimate and representation of his present intercession that we are able to comprehend. And this was in his prayer recorded John 17. For therein his confidence in God, his union in and with him, the declaration of his will and desires, are all expressed in such a manner as to give us the best understanding of his present intercession. For a created nature can rise no higher, to express an interest in God, with a oneness of mind and will, than is therein declared. And as the prayers with cries and tears, when he offered himself unto God, were peculiarly typed by the fire on the altar; so was this solemn prayer represented by that cloud of incense wherewith the high priest covered the ark and the mercy-seat at his entrance into the most holy place. In the virtue of this holy cloud of incense did he enter the holy place not made with hands. Or we may apprehend its relation unto the types in this order: His prayer, John 17, was the preparation of the sweet spices whereof the incense was made and compounded, Exod. 30:34. His sufferings that ensued thereon were as the breaking and bruising of those spices; wherein all his graces had their most fervent exercise, as spices yield their strongest savour under their bruising. At his entrance into the holy place this incense was fired with coals from the altar; that is, the efficacy of his oblation, wherein he had offered himself unto God through the eternal Spirit, rendered his prayer as incense covering the ark and mercy-seat,—that is, procuring the fruits of the atonement made before God.

(6.) It must be granted that there is no need of the use of words in the immediate presence of God. God needs not our words whilst we are here on earth, as it were absent from him; for he is present with us, and all things are naked and open before him. But we need the use of them for many reasons, which I have elsewhere declared. But in the glorious presence of God, when we shall behold him as the Lord Christ doth, in the most eminent manner, face to face, it cannot be understood what need or use we can have of words to express ourselves unto God, in prayers or praises. And the souls of men, in their separate state and condition, can have no use of voice or words; yet are they said to cry and pray with a loud voice, because they do so virtually and effectually, Rev. 6:9, 10. However, I will not determine what outward transactions are necessary, unto the glory of God in this matter, before the angels and saints that are about his throne. For there is yet a church-state in heaven, wherein we have communion, Heb. 12:22–24. What solemn outward, and, as it were, visible transactions of worship, are required thereunto, we know not. And, it may be, the representation of God's throne, and his worship, Rev. 4, 5, wherein the "Lamb in the midst of the throne" hath the principal part, may not belong only unto what is done in the church here below. And somewhat yet there is which shall cease, and not be any more after the day of judgment, 1 Cor. 15:26, 28.

(7.) It must be granted, that the virtue, efficacy, and prevalency of the intercession of the Lord Christ, depends upon and flows from his oblation and sacrifice. This we are plainly taught from the types of it of old. For the incense and carrying of blood into the holy place, after the expiatory sacrifice, the great type of his oblation of himself, did both of them receive their efficacy and had respect unto the sacrifice offered without. Besides, it is expressly said that the Lord Christ, "by the one offering of himself, obtained for us eternal redemption," and "for ever perfected them that are sanctified." Wherefore nothing remains for his intercession but the application of the fruits of his oblation unto all them for whom he offered himself in sacrifice, according as their conditions and occasions do require. Wherefore,—

(8.) The safest conception and apprehension that we can have of the intercession of Christ, as to the manner of it, is his continual appearance for us in the presence of God, by virtue of his office as the "high priest over the house of God," representing the efficacy of his oblation, accompanied with tender care, love, and desires for the welfare, supply, deliverance, and salvation of the church. Three things, therefore, concur hereunto: [1.] The presentation of his person before the throne of God on our behalf, Heb. 9:24. This renders it

sacerdotal. His appearance in person for us is required thereunto. [2.] The representation of his death, oblation, and sacrifice for us; which gives power, life, and efficacy unto his intercession. Thence he appears "in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that had been slain," Rev. 5:6. Both these are required to make his intercession sacerdotal. But, [3.] Both these do not render it prayer or intercession; for intercession is prayer, 1 Tim. 2:1, Rom. 8:26. Wherefore there is in it, moreover, a putting up, a requesting, and offering unto God, of his desires and will for the church, attended with care, love, and compassion, Zech. 1:12.

Thus far, then, may we proceed: (1.) It is a part of his sacerdotal office; he intercedes for us as the "high priest over the house of God." (2.) It is the first and principal way whereby he acts and exerciseth his love, compassion, and care towards the church. (3.) That he hath respect therein unto every individual believer, and all their especial occasions: "If any man sin, we have an advocate." (4.) That there is in his intercession an effectual signification of his will and desire unto his Father; for it hath the nature of prayer in it, and by it he expresseth his dependence upon God. (5.) That it respects the application of all the fruits, effects, and benefits, of his whole mediation unto the church; for this is the formal nature of it, that it is the way and means appointed of God, in the holy dispensation of himself and his grace unto mankind, whereby the continual application of all the benefits of the death of Christ, and all effects of the promises of the covenant, shall be communicated unto us, unto his praise and glory. (6.) The efficacy of this intercession as it is sacerdotal depends wholly on the antecedent oblation and sacrifice of himself; which is therefore as it were represented unto God therein. This is evident from the nature and order of the typical institutions whereby it was prefigured, and whereunto by our apostle it is accommodated. But what belongs unto the manner of the transaction of these things in heaven I know not.

The third thing observed, was the connection of the two things mentioned, or their relation one unto another; namely, the perpetual life of Christ and his intercession: "He liveth for ever to make intercession," His intercession is the end of his mediatory life; not absolutely, nor only, but principally. He lives to rule his church; he lives to subdue his enemies, for he must reign until they are all made his footstool; he lives to give the Holy Spirit in all his blessed effects unto believers. But because all these things proceed originally by an emanation of power and grace from God, and are given out into the hand of Christ upon his intercession, that may well be esteemed the principal end of his mediatory life. So he speaks expressly concerning that great fruit and effect of this life of

him, in sending of the Spirit: "I will pray the Father," I will intercede with him for it, "and he shall send you another comforter," John 14:16. And the power which he exerts in the subduing and destruction of the enemies of his kingdom, is expressly promised unto him upon his intercession for it, Ps. 2:8, 9; for this intercession of Christ is the great ordinance of God for the exercise of his power towards, and the communication of his grace unto the church, unto his praise and glory. So doth our high priest live to make intercession for us. Many things we may from hence observe:—

Obs. XIV. So great and glorious is the work of saving believers unto the utmost, that it is necessary that the Lord Christ should lead a mediatory life in heaven, for the perfecting and accomplishment of it: "He liveth for ever to make intercession for us."—It is generally acknowledged that sinners could not be saved without the death of Christ; but that believers could not be saved without the life of Christ following it, is not so much considered. See Rom. 5:10, 8:34, 35, etc. It is, it may be, thought by some, that when he had declared the name of God, and revealed the whole counsel of his will; when he hail given us the great example of love and holiness in his life; when he had fulfilled all righteousness, redeemed us by his blood, and made atonement for our sins by the oblation of himself; confirming his truth and acceptation with God in all these things by his resurrection from the dead, wherein he was "declared to be the Son of God with power;" that he might have now left us to deal for ourselves, and to build our eternal safety on the foundation that he had laid. But, alas! when all this was done, if he had only ascended into his own glory, to enjoy his majesty, honour, and dominion, without continuing his life and office in our behalf, we had been left poor and helpless; so that both we and all our right unto a heavenly inheritance should have been made a prey unto every subtle and powerful adversary. He could, therefore, no otherwise comfort his disciples when he was leaving this world, but by promising that "he would not leave them orphans," John 14:18; that is, that he would still continue to act for them, to be their patron, and to exercise the office of a mediator and advocate with the Father for them. Without this he knew they must be orphans; that is, such as are not able to defend themselves from injuries, nor secure their own right unto their inheritance.

The sure foundations of our eternal salvation were laid in his death and resurrection. So it is said, that when God laid the foundation of the earth, and placed the corner-stone thereof, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job 38:7. Although the foundations were only laid,

yet that being done by infinite power and wisdom, which would infallibly accomplish and perfect the whole, it was a blessed cause of praise and ascribing glory to God. Yet were the continued actings of the same power required unto the perfection of it. The foundation of the new creation was laid gloriously in the death and resurrection of Christ, so as to be the matter of triumphant praises unto God. Such is the triumph thereon described, Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 3:16. And it may be observed, that as on the laying of the foundation of the earth, all the holy angels triumphed in the expression and demonstration of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God, which they beheld; so in the foundation of the new creation, the apostate angels, who repined at it, and opposed it unto their power, were led captives, carried in triumph, and made the footstool of the glory of Christ. But all this joy and triumph is built on the security of the unchangeable love, care, and power of Jesus Christ, gloriously to accomplish the work which he had undertaken; for had he left it when he left the earth, it had never been finished; for great was that part of the work which yet remained to be perfected.

Neither could the remainder of this work be committed unto any other hand. He employeth others under him in his work, to act ministerially in his name and authority. So he useth the ministry of angels and men. But did not he himself continue to act in them, by them, with them, and without them, the whole work would fail and be disappointed. In one instance of the revelation of the will of God concerning the state of the church, by the opening of the book wherein it was recorded, there was none found worthy in heaven or earth to do it, but the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev. 5:1–7. How much less is any creature able to accomplish all that remains for the saving of the church unto the utmost!

Who can express the opposition that continues to be made unto this work of completing the salvation of believers? What power is able to conflict and conquer the remaining strength of sin, the opposition of Satan and the world? How innumerable are the temptations which every individual believer is exposed unto, each of them in its own nature ruinous and pernicious!

God alone knoweth all things perfectly, in infinite wisdom, and as they are. He alone knows how great a work it is to save believers unto the utmost; what wisdom, what power, what grace and mercy, are requisite thereunto. He alone knows what is meet unto the way and manner of it, so as it may be perfected unto his own glory. His infinite wisdom alone hath found out and determined the glorious and mysterious ways of the emanation of divine power and grace

unto this end. Upon all these grounds, unto all these purposes, hath he appointed the continual intercession of the Lord Christ in the most holy place. This he saw needful and expedient, unto the salvation of the church and his own glory. So will he exert his own almighty power unto those ends. The good Lord help me to believe and adore the mystery of it.

Obs. XV. The most glorious prospect that we can take into the things that are within the veil, into the remaining transactions of the work of our salvation in the most holy place, is in the representation that is made unto us of the intercession of Christ.—Of old when Moses went into the tabernacle, all the people looked after him, until he entered in; and then the pillar of the cloud stood at the door of it, that none might see into the holy place, Exod. 33:8, 9. And when the Lord Christ was taken into heaven, the disciples looked after him, until a cloud interposed at the tabernacle door, and took him out of their sight, Acts 1:9. And when the high priest was to enter into the tabernacle, to carry the blood of the sacrifice of expiation into the most holy place, no man, be he priest or not, was suffered to enter into or abide in the tabernacle, Lev. 16:17. Our high priest is now likewise entered into the most holy place, within the second veil, where no eye can pierce unto him. Yet is he there as a high priest; which makes heaven itself to be a glorious temple, and a place as yet for the exercise of an instituted ordinance, such as the priesthood of Christ is. But who can look into, who can comprehend the glories of those heavenly administrations? Some have pretended a view into the orders and service of the whole choir of angels, but have given us only a report of their own imaginations. What is the glory of the throne of God, what the order and ministry of his saints and holy ones, what is the manner of the worship that is given unto Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, the Scripture doth sparingly deliver, as knowing our disability, whilst we are clothed with flesh and inhabit tabernacles of clay, to comprehend aright such transcendent glories. The best and most steady view we can have of these things, is in the account which is given us of the intercession of Christ. For herein we see him by faith yet vested with the office of the priesthood, and continuing in the discharge of it. This makes heaven a temple, as was said, and the seat of instituted worship, Rev. 7:15. Hence, in his appearance unto John, he was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle;" both which were sacerdotal vestments, Rev. 1:13. Herein is God continually glorified; hereby is the salvation of the church continually carried on and consummated. This is the work of heaven, which we may safely contemplate by faith.

Obs. XVI. The intercession of Christ is the great evidence of the continuance of his love and care, his pity and compassion, towards his church.—Had he only continued to rule the church as its king and lord, he had manifested his glorious power, his righteousness, and faithfulness. "The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness." But mercy and compassion, love and tenderness, are constantly ascribed unto him as our high priest. See Heb. 4:15, 5:1, 2. So the great exercise of his sacerdotal office, in laying down his life for us, and expiating our sins by his blood, is still peculiarly ascribed unto his love, Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; Rev. 1:5. Wherefore these properties of love and compassion belong peculiarly unto the Lord Christ as our high priest. All men, who have any spiritual experience and understanding, will acknowledge how great the concernment of believers is in these things, and how all their consolation in this world depends upon them. He whose soul hath not been refreshed with a due apprehension of the unspeakable love, tenderness, and compassion of Jesus Christ, is a stranger unto the life of faith, and unto all true spiritual consolation.

But how shall we know that the Lord Christ is thus tender, loving, and compassionate, that he continueth so to be; or what evidence or testimony have we of it? It is true he was eminently so when he was upon the earth in the days of his flesh, and when he laid down his life for us. We know not what change may be wrought in nature itself, by his investiture with glory; nor how inconsistent these affections are, which in us cannot be separated from some weakness and sorrow, with his present state and dignity. Nor can any solid satisfaction be received by curious contemplations of the nature of glorified affections. But herein we have an infallible demonstration of it, that he yet continueth in the exercise of that office with respect whereunto all these affections of love, pity, and compassion, are ascribed unto him. As our high priest, δύναται συμπαθῆσαι, he is "able to suffer," to "condole with," to have "compassion on" his poor tempted ones, Heb. 4:15. All these affections doth he continually act and exercise in his intercession. From a sense it is of their wants and weaknesses, of their distresses and temptations, of their states and duties, accompanied with inexpressible love and compassion, that he continually intercedes for them. For he doth so, that their sins may be pardoned, their temptations subdued, their sorrows removed, their trials sanctified, and their persons saved; and doing this continually as a high priest, he is in the continual exercise of love, care, pity, and compassion.

Hebrews 7: 26

In this verse the apostle renders a reason of his whole preceding discourse, and why he laid so great weight upon the description of our high priest. And he hath probably in it a respect unto what he had last asserted in particular, concerning his ability to save them to the utmost that come to God by him.

Ver. 26.—Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔπρεπεν ἀρχιερεὺς, ὅσιος, ἄκακος, ἀμίαντος, κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν, καὶ ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος.

Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔπρεπεν. Syr., דַּאֲיִךְ חָנָא גַּיר כּוּמְרָא אַף זָדֵק הֲוָא לַן, "for yet also this high priest was just to us;" that is, it was just, right, or meet, that we should have this high priest. All others, "talis nos decebat."

Ὅσιος. Syr., דַּכְיָא, "pure;" "sanctus," "holy."

Ἄκακος. Syr., דְּלָא בִישׁו, "without malice." Beza, "ab omni malo alienus." "Innocens." "Free from all evil."

Ἀμίαντος. Syr., דְּלָא טוּלשָׁא, "without spot." Vulg., "impollutus;" Beza, "sine labe:" "unpolluted," "without spot."

Κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν. Syr., דְּפַרִיק מִן חַטָּהֵא, "separate from sins;" all others, "from sinners."

The words will be further explained in our inquiry into the things signified by them.

Ver. 26.—For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

There is something supposed and included in this assertion, namely, that if we intend to come unto God, we had need of a high priest to encourage and enable us thereunto; for if in particular we need such a high priest, it is supposed that without a high priest in general we can do nothing in this matter. This, therefore, is the foundation which in this argument the apostle proceedeth on, namely, that sinners, as we are all, can have no access unto God but by a high priest. And there was no need for him much to labour with those Hebrews in the confirmation hereof; for, from the first constitution of their church, they had no other way of approach unto God in and with their sacred services. And God had not only by the institution of that office among them, declared that this was the way whereby he would be worshipped; but also by legal prohibitions, fortified with severe penalties, he had forbidden all men, the highest, the greatest, the best and most holy, to come unto him any other way.

Hereby were they taught the everlasting necessity of a high priest, and the discharge of his office, whatever end or issue their typical priests came unto. And herein lies a great aggravation of the present misery of the Jews: High priest of their own they have none, nor have had for many ages. Hereon all their solemn worship of God utterly ceaseth. They are the only persons in the world who, if all mankind would give them leave and assist them in it, cannot worship God as they judge they ought to do. For if Jerusalem were restored into their possession, and a temple re-edified in it more glorious than that of Solomon, yet could they not offer one lamb in sacrifice to God; for they know that this cannot be done without a high priest and priests infallibly deriving their pedigree from Aaron, of whom they have amongst them not one in all the world. And so must they abide under a sense of being judicially excluded and cast out from all solemn worship of God, until the veil shall be taken from their hearts, and, leaving Aaron, they return unto Him who was typed by Melchisedec, unto whom even Abraham their father acknowledged his subjection.

Whence this necessity of a high priest for sinners arose, I have so largely inquired into and declared, in my Exercitations on the Original and Causes of the Priesthood of Christ, as that there is no need again to make mention of it. Every one's duty it is to consider it, and rightly improve it for himself. The want of living up unto this truth evacuates the religion of most men in the world.

Upon this supposition, of the necessity of a high priest in general, the apostle declares what sort of high priest was needful for us. And this he shows, 1. In his personal qualifications; 2. In his outward state and condition, verse 26; 3. In the nature of his office and the manner of its discharge, verse 27. And he confirmeth the whole by the consideration of the person who was this priest, and of the way and manner how he became so, compared with them and their consecration unto their office who were priests according unto the law, verse 28.

The first two are contained in this verse, namely, 1. The personal qualifications of him who was meet to be a priest for us, by whom we might come unto God; and, 2, His outward state and condition.

Ἔπρεπεν ἡμῖν. And in the first place, the necessity of such a high priest as is here described, is expressed by ἔπρεπε, "became us;" "decuit," "decebat," "it was meet," "it was just for us," as the Syriac renders it. And respect may be had therein either unto the wisdom of God, or unto our state and condition, or unto both;—such a high priest it was meet for God to give, and such a high priest it was needful that we should have. If the condecency of the matter,

which lies in a contrivance of proper means unto an end, be intended, then it is God who is respected in this word; if the necessity of the kind of relief mentioned be so, then it is we who are respected.

The word is applied unto God in this very case, chap. 2:10, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." Consider God as the supreme ruler and governor of the world, as the first cause and last end of all, and "it became him," was necessary unto his infinite wisdom and holiness, that having designed the "bringing of many sons unto glory," he should "make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." So the condecency here intended may respect, 1. The wisdom, grace, and goodness of God. It became him to give us such a high priest as we stood in need of, namely, one that was able in the discharge of that office to save all to the uttermost that come unto God by him; for to design our salvation by a high priest, and not to provide such a one as was every way able to effect it, became not the wisdom and grace of God.

Ἡμῖν. 2. Respect may be had herein unto our state and condition. Such this was, as none but such a high priest could relieve us in, or save us from. For we stand in need of such a one, as our apostle declares, as (1.) Could make atonement for our sins, or perfectly expiate them; (2.) Purge our consciences from dead works, that we might serve the living God, or sanctify us throughout by his blood; (3.) Procure acceptance with God for us, or purchase eternal redemption; (4.) Administer supplies of the Spirit of grace unto us, to enable us to live unto God in all duties of faith, worship, and obedience; (5.) Give us assistance and consolation in our trials, temptations, and sufferings, with pity and compassion; (6.) Preserve us by power from all ruining sins and dangers; (7.) Be in a continual readiness to receive us in all our addresses to him; (8.) To bestow upon us the reward of eternal life. Unless we have a high priest that can do all these things for us, we cannot be "saved to the uttermost." Such a high priest we stood in need of, and such a one it became the wisdom and grace of God to give unto us. And God, in infinite wisdom, love, and grace, gave us such a high priest as, in the qualifications of his person, the glory of his condition, and the discharge of his office, was every way suited to deliver us from the state of apostasy, sin, and misery, and to bring us unto himself, through a perfect salvation.—This the ensuing particulars will fully manifest.

Τοιοῦτος. The qualifications of this high priest are expressed first indefinitely, in the word τοιοῦτος. A difference from other high priests is included herein. He must not be one of an ordinary sort, but one so singularly qualified unto his

work, so exalted after his work, and so discharging his work unto such ends. In all these things we stood in need of such a high priest as was quite of another sort, order, and kind, than any the church had enjoyed under the law, as the apostle expressly concludes, verse 28.

FIRST, His personal, inherent qualifications are first expressed; and we shall consider first some things in general that are common unto them all, and then declare the especial intendment of every one of them in particular: "Such a high priest became us as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And,—

First, There is some allusion in all these things, 1. Unto what was typically represented in the institution of the office of the priesthood under the law. For the high priest was to be a person without blemish, not maimed in any part of his body. He was not to marry any one that was defiled; nor to defile himself among the people. On his forehead, in his ministrations, he wore a plate of gold with that inscription, "Holiness to the LORD." And no doubt but personal holiness was required of him in an especial manner; for want whereof God cast out the posterity of Eli from the priesthood.

But all those things were only outward representations of what was really required unto such a high priest as the church stood in need of. For they were mostly external, giving a denomination unto the subject, but working no real change in it. And where they were internal, they were encompassed with such a mixture of sins, weaknesses, infirmities, and the intercision of death, as that they had no glory in comparison of what was required. All these things the apostle observes, reducing them unto two heads, namely, that they were obnoxious unto sin and death; and therefore as they died, so they offered sacrifices for their own sins. But the church was taught by them, from the beginning, that it stood in need of a high priest whose real qualifications should answer all these types and representations of them.

2. It is possible that our apostle, in this description of our high priest, designed to obviate the prejudicate opinion of some of the Hebrews concerning their Messiah. For generally they looked on him as one that was to be a great earthly prince and warrior, that should conquer many nations, and subdue all their enemies with the sword, shedding the blood of men in abundance. In opposition unto this vain and pernicious imagination, our Saviour testifies unto them that he came not to kill, but to save and keep alive. And our apostle here gives such a description of him, in these holy, gracious qualifications, as might

attest his person and work to be quite of another nature than what they desired and expected. And their frustration herein was the principal occasion of their unbelief. See Mal. 3:1–3.

3. I am sorry that it hath fallen from the pen of an able expositor of our own on this place, that "the time when the Lord Christ was thus made a high priest for ever, and that by an oath, was after he had offered one sacrifice, not many; for the people, not for himself; once, not often; of everlasting virtue, and not effectual for some petty expiations for a time; and after he was risen, ascended, and set at the right hand of God."

If by being "made a high priest," only a solemn declaration of being made so is intended, these things may pass well enough; for we allow that in the Scripture, then a thing is ofttimes said to be, when it is first manifested or declared. So was the Lord Christ "determined to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." But if it be intended,—as the words will scarce admit of any other interpretation,—that the Lord Christ was first made a high priest after all this was performed, then the whole real priesthood of Christ and his proper sacrifice are overthrown. For it is said he was not made a high priest until "after that he had offered his one sacrifice;" and if it were so, then he was not a priest when he so offered himself. But this implies a contradiction; for there can be no sacrifice where there is no priest. And therefore the Socinians, who make the consecration of the Lord Christ unto his sacerdotal office to be by his entrance into heaven, do utterly deny his death to have been a sacrifice, but only a preparation for it, as they fancy the killing of the beast of old to have been. And the truth is, either the Lord Christ was a priest before and in the oblation of himself on the cross, or he was never any, nor needed so to be, nor could he so be; for after he was freed from death, he had nothing to offer. And it is a strange order of things, that the Lord Christ should first offer his only sacrifice, and after that be made a priest. But the order, time, and manner of the call and consecration of the Lord Christ unto his priesthood I have elsewhere declared. Wherefore,—

4. We may observe, that all these qualifications of our high priest were peculiarly necessary on the account of the sacrifice which he had to offer. They were not only necessary for him as he was to be the sacrificer, but also as he was to be the sacrifice; not only as he was to be the priest, but as he was to be the lamb. For the sacrifices were to be "without blemish," as well as the sacrificers. So were we "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. 1:19. But however the sacrifices were chosen

under the law without blemish, yet were they still in their own nature but calves, and goats, and lambs; and therefore priests who had weaknesses, and infirmities, and sins of their own, might be meet enough to offer them: but here both priest and sacrifice were to be equally pure and holy.

5. We must not pass by the wresting of this text by the Socinians, nor omit its due vindication. For they contend that this whole description of our high priest doth "not respect his internal qualifications in this world, before and in the offering of himself by his blood, but his glorious state and condition in heaven." For they fear (as well they may) that if the qualifications of a priest were necessary to him, and required in him whilst he was in this world, then he was so indeed. He who says, "Such an high priest became us, as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," doth affirm that when he was so he was our high priest. In that state wherein these things were necessary unto him he was a priest. To avoid this ruin unto their pretensions, they offer violence unto the text, and the signification of every word in it, and dangerously insinuate a negation of the things intended, to be in Christ in this world. So speaks Schlichtingius on the place: "Unde apparet sequentibus verbis, seu epithetis Christo tributis, non mores ipsius seu vitam ab omni peccati labe puram, sed felicem ac beatum statum describi ac designari, ob quem fiat ut in æternum vivens, nostri quoque perpetuam gerat curam. Licet enim omnia ista ratione vitæ et morum de Christo intellecta verissima sint, tamen nihil ad præsens auctoris institutum faciunt." So also argues Smalcius, de Reg. Christi, cap. xxiii., whom we have elsewhere refuted.

The paraphrase of one of our own seems to comply herewith; which is as followeth: "And this was a sort of high priests which we sinful, weak creatures had need of," (which, by the way, I do not understand; for we stood not in need of a new "sort of high priests," but of one single individual high priest,) "one that, being mercifully disposed, is also incapable of suffering any hurt, of being defiled or corrupted, and consequently of dying; and to that end is exalted unto a pitch above our sinful, corruptible condition here." So ἄκακος and ἀμίαντος are rendered in the margin, "free from evil, and undefilable." The sense is plainly the same with that of Schlichtingius, though there be some variety in the expressions of the one and the other. And therefore is Christ said to be exalted that he might be such as he is here described; as though he was not so before in the sense here intended by the apostle, however the words here in another sense might be applied unto him.

Three things seem to be aimed at in this exposition:—

(1.) To make way for another corrupt notion on the next verse, wherein these men, with Grotius, would have Christ in some sense offer for his own sins also; which there can be no pretence for, if these things be ascribed unto him as he was a priest in this world.

(2.) To take care that the innocency, holiness, and absolute purity of our high priest, be not supposed to be necessary unto our justification, neither as the material nor formal cause of it. For if the Lord Christ in the sacrifice of himself died for our justification, and that he might do so, it was necessary that he should antecedently be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" then was his being so necessary unto our justification, as a cause thereof.

(3.) To obviate an apprehension of his being a high priest before his death, and to have offered his one sacrifice therein. For if he had not the qualifications necessary unto a high priest before his ascension into heaven, he could not be so before.

But these things are none of them compliant with the truth; and,—

(1.) This exposition is contrary to the concurrent sense of all sober ancient and modern expositors; and, which is more, it is contrary to the common sense of all Christians. Not one of them who knoweth aught of these things,—unless their minds are perverted with these men's glosses, and that merely to comply with other opinions wherein the text is no way concerned,—but hold, in their first and last consideration of these words, that they respect Jesus Christ as to his personal holiness in this world. And that exposition had need be well confirmed, which is not only contrary to the judgment of all learned men, but also destructive of the common faith of Christians. But as yet we have nothing beyond crude assertions offered in the proof of it.

(2.) It is contrary unto, or inconsistent with, the sense and use of the words in all good authors, sacred and profane; and contrary unto the application of them unto the Lord Christ in other places of the Scripture, as we shall see immediately.

(3.) It is contrary to the order of the apostle's words; for he placeth all these properties as qualifications of his person antecedently unto his exaltation. He was first "holy, harmless, undefiled," and then "made higher than the heavens;" but according unto this exposition, his being made higher than the heavens is the antecedent cause of his being made holy, etc.

(4.) It is highly false, that the blessed state pretended to be here set forth was antecedently unto his being a priest, and the sacrifice which he offered; yea, such an estate was inconsistent with the oblation of himself. For he offered himself unto God in his blood, Heb. 9:14; and that with strong cries and tears, chap. 5:7: which were inconsistent with such a state; for it is so described on purpose to be exclusive of every thing required thereunto.

(5.) Schlichtingius pleads, "That although all these things were true with respect unto the life and manners of Christ, yet it was no way unto the purpose of the apostle to mention them unto the end designed." But, [1.] If that be the sense of the words which he contends for, not one of them is true with respect unto the life and manners of Christ in this world; for they all belong unto his blessed estate in the other. [2.] We shall see on the next verse how far he will allow them to be true of the life and manners of Christ in any sense, seeing in some sense he affirms him to have offered sacrifice for his own sins. And this he doth with an express contradiction unto his own main hypothesis: for by "sins" he understands weaknesses and infirmities; and whereas he will not allow Christ to have offered himself before his entrance into the holy place, and makes it necessary that he should be antecedently freed from all weaknesses and infirmities, it is the highest contradiction to affirm that he offered for them, seeing he could not offer himself until he was delivered from them. [3.] We have only his bare word for it, that the ascription of those things unto our high priest as inherent qualifications, was not unto the purpose of the apostle. And his assertion is built on a false supposition, namely, that the Lord Christ was not a high priest on the earth, nor did offer himself unto God in his death; which overthrows the foundation of the gospel.

Secondly, The vanity and falsehood of this novel exposition will yet further and fully be evinced, in an inquiry into the proper signification of these words as here used by the apostle; every one whereof is wrested to give countenance unto it:—

1. He is, or was to be, ὅσιος, "sanctus," "holy;" that is, חָסִיד. For, Acts 2:27, חָסִידְךָ is rendered Τὸν ὁσιόν σου, "Thine Holy One," from Ps. 16:10. And the Lord Christ is there said to he ὅσιος antecedently unto his resurrection; which must be with respect unto his internal holiness: "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And in the New Testament the word is everywhere used for him that is internally holy, 1 Tim. 2:8; Tit. 1:8. The Syriac renders it in this place by דַּכְיָא, "pure;" which is an inherent qualification; as it doth, 1 Tim.

2:8, and Tit. 1:8, by חָסִיד, "pious," "holy." Ὅσιος, saith Hesychius, καθαρός, δίκαιος, εὐσεβής, εἰρηνικός, ἅγιος,—"pure," "righteous," "godly," "peaceable," "chaste." So ὁσίως is used only for "holily," 1 Thess. 2:10; and ὁσιότης is "internal holiness," Luke 1:75; Eph. 4:24. Nowhere is it used for a merciful disposition, much less for venerable and sacred, upon the account of an immortal nature, or any other privilege, as it is pretended. Neither is the word used in any other good author to signify any one but him that is holy and righteous, or free from all sin and wickedness.

It is therefore the holy purity of the nature of Christ that is intended in this expression. His life and actions are expressed in the ensuing epithets. His nature was pure and holy, absolutely free from any spot or taint of our original defilement. Hence, as he was conceived in the womb, and as he came from the womb, he was that τὸ ἅγιον, "holy thing" of God, Luke 1:35. All others since the fall have a polluted nature, and are originally unholy. But his conception being miraculous, by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost, and his nature not derived unto him by natural generation, (the only means of the propagation of original defilement,) and, in the first instant of its being, filled with all habitual seeds of grace, he was ὅσιος, "holy." And such a high priest became us as was so. Had he had a nature touched with sin, he had not been meet either to be a priest or sacrifice. This holiness of nature was needful unto him who was to answer for the unholiness of our nature, and to take it away. Unholy sinners do stand in need of a holy priest and a holy sacrifice. What we have not in ourselves we must have in him, or we shall not be accepted with the holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Ἄκακος. 2. He was to be ἄκακος. That is, saith Schlichtingius, "omnis mali expers, nullis amplius miseriis obnoxius." "Incapable of suffering any hurt," saith another, to the same purpose. (1.) The word is but once more used in the New Testament, and that in a sense remote enough from "one not exposed to misery," or "incapable of suffering:" Rom. 16:18, ἐξαπατῶσι τὰς καρδίας τῶν ἀκάκων,—men "simple and harmless;" who for the most part are exposed to most evils and troubles in the world. (2.) It is never used in any good author in such a sense, nor can any instance be produced unto that purpose; but it constantly signifies one innocent, harmless, free from malice, who doth no evil. Nor did any one before these interpreters dream of a passive interpretation of this word. It is he who doth no evil; not he who can suffer no evil. Κακός is "malus," or "qui dolo malo utitur;" an evil, malicious person. Κακία is "vitiositas," in the judgment of Cicero. [Tusc. Quæst., lib. iv. cap. xv.] "Virtutis,"

saith he, "contraria est vitiositas: sic enim malo quàm malitiam appellare eam, quam Græci κακίαν appellant; nam malitia certi cujusdam vitii nomen est: vitiositas, omnium." We render it sometimes "naughtiness," James 1:21; sometimes "malice," or "maliciousness," 1 Pet. 1:16;—all manner of evil with deceitful guile. Wherefore ἄκακος is he that is free from all evil, fraud, or sin; the same absolutely with that of the apostle Peter, 1 Epist. 2:22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

Οσιος, "holy," is his epithet with respect unto his nature; ἄκακος, "harmless," respects his life. The first includes all positive holiness; the other, an abnegation of all unholiness. As he was ὅσιος, he had not κακὸν παρακείμενον, "sin present," as we have with us, Rom. 7:18, 21; or ἁμαρτίαν εὐπερίστατον, "sin easily besetting," Heb. 12:1. As he was ἄκακος, he was free from every effect of such a principle.

And we had need of such a high priest. Had he not been innocent and every way blameless himself, he would have had other work to do than always to take care of our salvation, as the apostle observes in the next verse. He must first have offered for his own sins, as the high priest did of old, before he had offered for us or ours. And this added unto the merit of his obedience. For whereas he was absolutely innocent, harmless, and free from all evil and guile, he was reproached and charged with every thing that is evil;—a "seducer," a "blasphemer," a "seditious person," the worst of malefactors. For herein also, as to the suffering part, "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And a great encouragement this is unto those who suffer in the like kind, according to their measure.

Ἀμίαντος. 3. He was to be ἀμίαντος,—"cujus felicitas et beatitas nulla vel minima adversitate quasi labe pollui inficique possit," saith Schlichtingius; than which a more vain imagination or more absurd expression can hardly be thought on. But it is not for us to charge the apostle with such obscurity, and expressing of his mind in such uncouth terms, never used by any others, nor by himself in any other place in such a sense or signification. "Unpolluted," "undefiled;" that is, "every way happy and blessed, not touched with the defilement of any adversity"! But the use of adversity is to purge and purify. And as that word doth properly signify "undefiled," "unpolluted,"—that is, morally, with any sin or evil,—so it is not used in the New Testament in any other sense. See Heb. 13:4; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:4. The inquiry, therefore, is how this differs from ἄκακος, which contains a negation of all moral evil. Ans. The one is, "he did no evil in himself;" the other, that "he contracted none from any thing else," nor from any persons with whom he conversed. This may fall out

sometimes. Hence the prophet, in his consternation at the appearance of the glory of God unto him, cried out he was "undone;" not only because of his own sinful defilements, but because of the uncleanness of the people among whom he dwelt, Isa. 6:5. And on this ground there was an atonement of old to be made for the holy place and tabernacle. Not that they had any uncleanness of their own, but because of the uncleanness of the people, and their remaining among them in the midst of their uncleannesses, Lev. 16:16.

And besides, many things might befall the high priests of old whereby they might be legally defiled, and so rendered incapable for the discharge of their office. And for this cause they always had a second priest in readiness, at the great solemn festivals, especially at the anniversary expiation, that in case any such pollution should befall the high priest, the other might for that time take his place and discharge his office. So it was with them principally with respect unto ceremonials, though immoralities might also defile them, and incapacitate them for their duty. But no such thing was our high priest liable unto, either from himself or from converse with others. As he was unconcerned in ceremonials, so in all moral obedience nothing could affix on him either spot or blemish. And "such an high priest became us;" for whereas it was his design and work to "sanctify and cleanse his church," until it have "neither spot nor wrinkle," but be "holy and without blemish," as it was, Eph. 5:26, 27, how had he been meet to attempt or effect this work had not he himself been every way "undefiled?"

Κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν. 4. He was κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν. That is, saith Schlichtingius, "loco et conditione, ut statim additur, 'excelsior cœlis factus.' " He is at the bottom of his notions and end of his invention, so that he can find out no sense for this expression, but puts us off to the next words, which are quite of another signification, or express a thing of another nature, and are distinguished from this expression by the conjunction, "and." "Separate from sinners;" that is, saith he, "made higher than the heavens"! We must therefore inquire after another sense of these words, which readily offers itself unto us.

"Separate from sinners:" "from sins," saith the Syriac. But that was sufficiently secured before. From sinners as sinners, and in their sins. He was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. We must therefore consider wherein he was, and wherein he was not separate from sinners:—

(1.) He was not separate from them as unto community of nature; for God sent his own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. 8:3. He sent him in the flesh, for he sent him "made of a woman, made under the law," Gal. 4:4; wherein "the Word was made flesh," John 1:14: but he sent him only "in the likeness of sinful flesh;" and that because "he made him sin for us, who knew no sin," 2 Cor. 5:21. He took our flesh, that is, our nature upon him, without sin; yet so as that, by reason of the charge of sin with the consequences thereof that was upon him, he was "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He was not, therefore, really separate from sinners as they were flesh, but as they were sinful flesh. He "took upon him the seed of Abraham;" and "because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also partook of the same." Without this relation unto us, and union with us in one common nature, whereby "he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are of one," he could not have been a high priest or sacrifice for us. He was not, therefore, so separated from sinners, as to be of another nature from them. "He took not on him the nature of angels," nor was a mere spirit, but had "flesh and bones," as he declared unto his disciples. And the same nature he hath still with him in heaven; and in the same will appear at judgment. It is equally destructive unto our faith and comfort, to suppose our high priest not separate from us in point of sin, and to be separate from us as to his nature.

(2.) He was not separate from sinners as to the duties of outward conversation. He lived not in a wilderness, nor said unto the children of men, "Stand off, I am holier than you." He conversed freely with all sorts of persons, even publicans and harlots; for which he was reproached by the proud, hypocritical Pharisees. His work was to call sinners to repentance, and to set before their eyes an example of holiness. This he could not have done had he withdrawn himself from all communication with them. Yea, he condescended unto them beyond the legal austerities of the Baptist, Matt. 11:18, 19. Hence those who of old, pretending more than ordinary holiness and devotion, did withdraw themselves into wildernesses from the converse of men, did quite forget the example and work of their Master: yea, they did avowedly prefer the example of the Baptist, as they supposed, before that of our Saviour; which sufficiently reflects on his wisdom and holiness. Nor, indeed, did they in the least express the pattern which they proposed unto themselves for imitation. For although John lived in the wilderness of Judea for the most part, yet was he "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He lived there where it was most convenient for him to discharge his ministry, and preach the word of God. And

his austerities in food and raiment, were but to express outwardly the doctrine of repentance enforced by threats which he preached. But as these persons forsook the example of Christ and the gospel, to go back unto John and his ministry, so they utterly mistook their pattern, and instead of making their retirement a means and help to discharge the ministry in calling others unto faith and repentance, they made it a covert for their own ignorance and superstition. And for those votaries of the Roman church who pretend, in the foolish imitation of them, to fancy a wilderness in the midst of populous cities, there can be no course of life invented more alien from the conduct of natural light, more useless unto the glory of God and the good of the community of mankind, nor more contrary to the example and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles.

(3.) He is not said to be separate from sinners so in state and condition as kings and potentates are from persons poor and mean; and who therefore, out of a sense of their own meanness, and the others' state and greatness of mind, dare not approach unto them. No; but as he was meek and lowly, and took up his whole converse with the lower sort of the people, the poor of this world, so he did by all ways and means invite and encourage all sorts of sinners to come unto him.

(4.) He is not said to be separate from sinners, as though he had been ever in any communion with them, in any thing wherein he was afterwards separated from them. The participle, κεχωρισμένος, hath the sense of an adjective, declaring what is, and not how he came so to be. He was always in such a state and condition, so holy, so harmless, and undefiled, as never to have a concern in any thing from which he was to be separated.

It appeareth hence plainly wherein it was that he was "separate from sinners;" namely, in sin, in its nature, causes, and effects. Whatever of that sort he underwent was upon our account, and not his own. He was every way, in the perfect holiness of his nature and his life, distinguished from all sinners; not only from the greatest, but from those who ever had the least taint of sin, and who otherwise were most holy. And so it became us that he should be. He that was to be a middle person between God and sinners, was to be separate from those sinners in that thing on the account whereof he undertook to stand in their stead.

And these are the properties of the human nature of our high priest, and which were necessary antecedently unto the discharge of any part or duty of his office.

SECONDLY, His present state and condition is in the next place expressed: "And made higher than the heavens."

Ὑψηλότερος γενόμενος,—"made higher." God is called אֵל עֶלְיוֹן, Θεὸς ὕψιστος, —"the most high God," "God above." And glory is to be ascribed unto him ἐν ὑψίστοις, "in the highest," Luke 2:14. And the Lord Christ in his exaltation is said to "sit down at the right hand of the Majesty ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, Heb. 1:3,—"on high."

He was for a season "made lower than the angels," made on the earth, and "descended into the lower parts of the earth;" and that for the discharge of the principal part of his priestly office, namely, the offering of himself for a sacrifice unto God. But he abode not in that state, nor could he discharge his whole office and all the duties of it therein; and therefore was "made higher than the heavens." He was not made higher than the heavens that he might be a priest: but being our high priest, and as our high priest, he was so made, for the discharge of that part of his office which yet remained to be performed; for he was to live for ever to make intercession for us.

Ὑψηλός, as may be seen in the foregoing instances, hath a double signification; 1. Of place; 2. Of state and condition.

1. If it be place that is meant, then by "the heavens" which he is made above, those aspectable heavens with all their glory are intended. He is no longer on the earth, but exalted into a throne of majesty above these heavens. So it is said that he "passed through the heavens," when he went into the presence of God, Heb. 4:14, 15. And there he abides. For although "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," as unto the immensity of his divine nature, yet as unto his human nature, here spoken of, "the heaven must receive him, until the times of the restitution of all things," Acts 3:21. He is in this sense no more on the earth, nor subject unto any of those inconveniencies which his abode here below must be exposed unto. Yea, had he always continued here, he could not have been such a high priest as became us, as our apostle declares, Heb. 8:4.

2. Ὑψηλός may respect state and condition, or the glorious state on the right hand of the Majesty on high which he is exalted unto. And in this sense, by "the heavens," than which Christ is "made higher," exalted above, the angels, the

sacred inhabitants of those heavenly places, are intended. And this our apostle in other places often insists upon, as a great manifestation of the glory of Christ. See Eph. 1:21, 22; Phil. 2:10, 11; Heb. 1:4, 2:7, 8.

I see no reason but that both these may be included in this expression. He was so exalted, as to the place of his residence, from the earth, above these aspectable heavens, as withal to be placed, in honour, dignity, and power, above all the inhabitants of heaven, He only excepted who puts all things under him.

And so we have finished the exposition of these words, with the vindication of the proper meaning of them.

Two ends there are why the apostle gives us such a description of the high priest that "became us," or which we stood in need of:—

1. To manifest that the Levitical priests were in no way qualified for this office, no way meet or able to bring us unto God. Somethings they did represent, but nothing of themselves they did effect. They all of them came short in every qualification which was necessary unto this end. They were all sinners; and living and dying on the earth, they never attained unto that condition of glory and dignity which was necessary unto the full and final discharge of that office. So he declares his mind to have been expressly in the next verses.

2. To encourage the faith of believers, by evidencing unto them, that whatever was needful in a high priest, to bring them to God, and to save them to the utmost, was found in all perfection in Christ Jesus. And we may observe, that,—

Obs. I. Although these properties of our high priest are principally to be considered as rendering him meet to be our high priest, yet are they also to be considered as an exemplar and idea of that holiness and innocency which we ought to be conformable unto.—If we will give up ourselves to the conduct of this high priest, if by him alone we design to approach unto God, conformity unto him in holiness of nature and life, according unto our measure, is indispensably required of us. None can more dishonour the Lord Christ, nor more perniciously deceive and betray their own souls, than by professing him to be their priest, with their trust thereby to be saved by him, and yet not endeavour to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," like unto him.

Obs. II. Seeing all these properties were required unto Christ and in him, that he might be our high priest, he was all that he is here said to be for us, and for our sakes; and benefit from them doth redound unto us.—For seeing he was a priest for us, all that he was that he might be a priest was for us also. "Such a high priest became us," and such a high priest we have.

Obs. III. The infinite grace and wisdom of God are always to be admired by us, in providing such a high priest as was every way meet for us, with respect unto the great end of his office, namely, the bringing of us unto himself.

Obs. IV. The dignity, duty, and safety of the gospel church, depend solely on the nature, qualifications, and exaltation of our high priest. Or, our high priest every way answering the mind, the holiness, and wisdom of God, as also all our wants and necessities, our whole state and condition, the work of our salvation is absolutely secured in his hand.—The great design of the gospel is to satisfy believers herein. And God would have it so, that he might provide not only for our future salvation, but for our present consolation also.

Obs. V. If such a high priest "became us," was needful unto us, for the establishment of the new covenant, and the communication of the grace thereof unto the church, then all persons, Christ alone excepted, are absolutely excluded from all interest in this priesthood.—He that takes upon himself to be a priest under the gospel, must be "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,"—that is, absolutely so; or he is an impostor, who endeavours to deceive the souls of men.

Obs. VI. If, therefore, we consider aright what it is that we stand in need of, and what God hath provided for us, that we may be brought unto him in his glory, we shall find it our wisdom to forego all other expectations, and to betake ourselves unto Christ alone.

Hebrews 7: 27, 28

Ὃς οὐκ ἔχει καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἀνάγκην, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν θυσίας ἀναφέρειν, ἔπειτα τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν ἐφάπαξ, ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας. Ὁ νόμος γὰρ ἀνθρώπους καθίστησιν ἀρχιερεῖς ἔχοντας ἀσθένειαν· ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς ὁρκωμοσίας τῆς μετὰ τὸν νόμον, Υἱὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον.

The words used in this context have been opened in several places before. And in one thing only is there any material difference among the translators of them; and this is in these words, τῆς μετὰ τὸν νόμον. For the Syriac reads them, דַּהֲוָת, בָּתַר נָמוּסָא, rendering the article in the masculine gender, "who was after

the law;" and so doth the Vulgar Latin also, "qui post legem est," referring unto λόγος as the antecedent, and not ὁρκωμοσίας. And Erasmus renders μετὰ τὸν νόμον by "supra legem," "above the law." But others think, and that rightly, that μετά with an accusative case is never to be rendered by "supra," or "above."

Ver. 27, 28.—Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, the Son, who is perfected for evermore.

As these verses contain other instances of the pre-eminence of our high priest above those of the order of Aaron, so all those mentioned in the former of them do depend directly on and flow from the qualifications and endowments of his person expressed in that foregoing. For whereas he is such an one as is there described, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,"—for such an one alone "became us,"—he was above and freed from all those things and services which the Levitical priests were obliged unto, for want of these qualifications. For all the things ascribed, verse 27, unto them and denied concerning him, were all effects of the weakness and imperfection of their persons and their services; which he, as unto his person, was absolutely exempt and free from, so that he had no need to do as they did. And this being declared, the whole matter, with the fundamental reason of all the differences insisted on, is summarily expressed, verse 28, as we shall see in the exposition of the words.

Ver. 27.—"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

The words are a negation as they respect our high priest, and include an affirmation with respect unto the priests of the law, both in sundry instances. And the design of them is to exclude all those imperfections from him which they were subject unto. And we may observe in the words,—

Οὐκ ἔχει ἀνάγκην 1. The manner of the negation, Οὐκ ἔχει ἀνάγκην,—"He needeth not;" it is not necessary for him. The things expressed were not such as those priests might do or omit, as they saw occasion, but they were necessarily obliged unto them. And the necessity the apostle intends was not only that which arose from God's institution, who appointed them to offer daily, "first for themselves, and then for the people," but that also which arose from their own

state and condition, and from the nature of the sacrifices that they offered: for themselves being weak, infirm, and sinful; and their offerings being only of earthly things, that could never perfectly expiate sin; these things were necessary for them, and so God had ordained. Wherefore there are three grounds or reasons of the necessity here ascribed unto these priests:—

(1.) God had appointed them so to do. This comes first to view although there be another reason even of this appointment. And God taught hereby both them and the church their utter incapacity to effect the work committed unto them at once, whereon they were to multiply their oblations.

(2.) The nature of the offerings and sacrifices which they offered did make the manner of it here expressed necessary unto them. For they were such as could not attain the end of expiating sin, but only could represent that which did so; and therefore the repetition of them was needful, because their principal use was to be instructive only. Things that are really efficient themselves may at once produce and perfect their effects; but those which are instructive only must be reiterated.

(3.) This necessity arose from their own state before God, and the state of the people. For they themselves often sinned, and having no other to offer for them, it was necessary that they should often offer for themselves. And so it was with the people also. They sinned still, and still must be offered for. After one offering, their sins again increased on them, and made another necessary.

From all these considerations our high priest was absolutely exempted; and that on a twofold account: (1.) Of his person; which being "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," he needed not to offer for himself. (2.) Of his offering; which being at once perfectly expiatory of the sins of the people, needed not to be repeated. And on these grounds God also had appointed that he should offer himself only "once for all."

Ὡσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς. 2. The second thing in these words is the declaration of them that lay under this necessity which our high priest was not liable unto, Ὡσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς,—"As the high priests;" that is, those high priests of the law concerning whom he had treated. So we well render the words, "As those high priests;"—in like manner as they were, or as they had need. For the apostle, with respect unto the Levitical priesthood, carrieth on the comparison between Christ and them; especially in the instance of the high priests, and the discharge of their office, for they were the head of the priesthood, and the glory of the church of Israel. Howbeit all other priests, employed in the holy offerings

and sacrifices of the people, are included herein. And it is apparent, that if the priesthood of Christ doth so far excel that office in the high priests of the old testament, it must needs excel it in those of a subordinate order or degree. All those priests had need to offer in the manner here expressed.

3. A threefold difference is intimated between our high priest and them; as, —

(1.) In the frequency of their offerings: they were to offer "daily,"—which also includes the order of their offering, "first for themselves, and then for the people,"—whereas he offered "once" only.

(2.) It is supposed they offered the sacrifices appointed by the law, which were of brute creatures only,—whence their insufficiency and frequent repetition did proceed, as declared, Heb. 10:1–3,—he "offered up himself."

(3.) In the cause of their offering; they offered for their own sins, but he had none of his own to offer for.

Now all the things here ascribed unto the Levitical priests, are weaknesses and imperfections in their office. And hereby the main position of the apostle, and which was destructive of the whole fabric of Mosaical worship, namely, that "the law" whereby they were constituted "made nothing perfect," was abundantly confirmed. For the greatest effect of that law was the constitution of this priesthood. And what perfection can be expected by such a priesthood, where the priests were obliged continually to offer for their own sins? No sooner was one offering past, but they were providing matter making another necessary. And so it was with respect unto the sins of the people. And what perfection could be comprised in an everlasting rotation of sins and sacrifices? Is it not manifest that this priesthood and these sacrifices could never of themselves expiate sin, nor make perfect them that came to God by them? Their instructive use was excellent: they both directed faith to look unto the great future priest and sacrifice, and established it, in that they were pledges given of God in assurance thereof. The eye of them all was a continual guidance unto the church to look unto Him who alone was to make atonement for sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Howbeit they were of that nature, and were so ordained of God, that they could never give perfect ease and peace unto them that were exercised in them. Some relief they found in them, but complete peace they did not afford. Nor can any thing do so that is often to be repeated. The frequent repetition of the sacrifice of the mass in the church of Rome, doth sufficiently manifest that there is no solid, abiding peace with God in that

church; for this is not to be attained by any thing that must be frequently repeated. So our apostle affirms expressly, that if the sacrifices of the law could have made perfect them that came to God by them, or given them perfect peace with God, they would have ceased to be offered. And so it would be with the sacrifice of the mass. Only by the one offering of Christ they are perfected, as to peace with God, for whom he offered. And it gave great evidence unto their instructive efficacy, that in themselves they were so weak, so imperfect, and ineffectual.

It was therefore unbelief heightened unto obstinacy which caused the Hebrews to refuse this high priest and sacrifice when exhibited of God, whereas before they could never attain unto peace firm and stable. But love of carnal worship, and adherence unto self-righteousness, are inseparable companions.

Obs. God requireth our faith and obedience in and unto nothing but what is, as absolutely needful for us, so highly reasonable unto the minds of them that are enlightened.—Such was this priesthood of Christ, now proposed unto the faith of the church, in comparison of what was before enjoyed.

Καθ᾽ ἡμέραν. 4. There is in the words the time and season of the performance of what is here ascribed unto these high priests, as necessary for them. They were to do it καθ᾽ ἡμέραν, "daily;" that is, so often as occasion required, according unto the law. For there is no reason to confine the apostle's intention unto the annual expiatory sacrifice only; as though καθ᾽ ἡμέραν were the same with κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτόν, Heb. 10:1,—"daily" as much as "yearly." It is true, that in that sacrifice the high priest offered "first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people;" but πρότερον, here used, doth not express that order, as we shall see. Nor is it the תָּמִיד, or "daily sacrifice" alone, that is intended, though that be included also; for that "juge sacrificium" had respect unto the sins of the whole church, both priests and people. And we are obliged to pray for the pardon of sin every day, by virtue of that sacrifice which is πρόσφατος καὶ ζῶσα, "new and living" in its efficacy continually, and as occasion doth require. And so there was an obligation on the priest to offer for himself a sin-offering, as often as he "sinned according to the sin of the people:" Lev. 4:3, "If the priest that is anointed" (that is, the high priest) "do sin according to the sin of the people, then let him bring, for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin-offering." And unto this institution the apostle here hath respect.

Θυσίας ἀναφέρειν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν. 5. What they were thus obliged unto is declared: Θυσίας ἀναφέρειν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν,—"To offer sacrifices for sins." All propitiatory and expiatory sacrifices are intended; but possibly a principal regard is had unto the great anniversary sacrifice, in the feast of expiation, Lev. 16. For although the apostle mentions θυσίας, "sacrifices," in the plural number, and that was but one, yet because of the repetition of it, it being "offered year by year continually," as he speaks, Heb. 10:1, it may be signified hereby. And those sacrifices were ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν. And in answer unto them our Lord Jesus Christ offered himself a sacrifice for sin. And this is expressed by περὶ ἁμαρτίας, "for sin," only, without the mention of sacrifice, Rom. 8:3. For because חַטָּאת signifies both "the sin and the sacrifice" for it, as the verb, חָטָא, signifies in one conjugation "to sin," and in another "to expiate sin," the sacrifice itself is expressed by περὶ ἁμαρτίας, "for sin."

Πρότερον καὶ ἔπειτα. 6. The order of these sacrifices is expressed by πρότερον and ἔπειτα,—"first" and "then:" "first for his own sins," and "then for those of the people." Either the whole discharge of the office of the high priest may be intended in this order, or that which was peculiar unto the feast of expiation. For he was in general to take care in the first place about offering for his own sins, according to the law, Lev. 4: for if that were not done in due order, if their own legal guilt were not expiated in its proper season, according to the law, they were no way meet to offer for the sins of the congregation; yea, they exposed themselves unto the penalty of excision. And this order was necessary, seeing the law appointed men to be priests who had infirmities of their own, as is expressed in the next verse. Or the order intended may respect in an especial manner the form and process prescribed in the solemn anniversary sacrifice at the feast of expiation, Lev. 16. First he was to offer a sin-offering for himself and his house, and then for the people; both on the same day.

Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν. (1.) Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν,—"For his own sins." And this upon a double account: [1.] Because he was really a sinner, as the rest of the people were: "If he do sin according, to the sin of the people," Lev. 4:3. [2.] That upon the expiation of his own sins in the first place, he might be the more meet to represent Him who had no sin. And therefore he was not to offer for himself in the offering that he made for the people, but stood therein as a sinless person, as our high priest was really to be.

Τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ. (2.) Τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ,—"For the sins of the people;" that is, for the whole congregation of Israel, according to the law, Lev. 16:21.

This was the duty, the order and method of the high priests of old, in their offerings and sacred services. This their weaknesses, infirmities, and sins, as also the sacrifices which they offered, did require. All that could be learned from it was, that some more excellent priest and sacrifice were to be introduced. For no perfection, no consummation in divine favour, no settled peace of conscience, could in this way be obtained; all things openly declared that so they could not be. And hence have we an evidence of what is affirmed, John 1:17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And the privilege or advancement of the church, in its deliverance from those various, multiplied, obscure means of instruction, into the glorious light of the way and causes of our adoption, justification, and salvation, is inexpressibly great and full of grace. No longer are we now obliged unto a rigid observance of those things which did not effect what they did represent. An increase in thankfulness, fruitfulness, and holiness, cannot but be expected from us.

These are the things that are here denied of our high priest: He had no need to offer sacrifice in this way, order, and method. The offering of sacrifice is not denied,—that is, sacrifice for the sins of the people; yea, it is positively asserted in the next words: but that he offered daily, many sacrifices, or any for himself, or had need so to do, this is denied by the apostle. That alone which he did is asserted in the remaining words of the verse: "For this he did once, when he offered up himself."

And two things are in the words: 1. What he did in general; 2. In particular, how he did it:—

Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν. For the first, it is said, Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν,—"This he did." Τοῦτο refers only unto one clause of the antecedent, namely, "offering for the sins of the people." "This he did once, when he offered up himself." For himself he did not offer.

But contrary unto the sense of the whole church of God, contrary to the analogy of faith, and with no small danger in the expression, Socinus first affirmed that the Lord Christ offered also for himself, or his own sins. And he is followed herein by those of his own sect, as Schlichtingius on this place: and so he is also by Grotius and Hammond;—which is the channel whereby many of his notions and conceptions are derived unto us. It is true, that both he and they do acknowledge that the Lord Christ had no sins of his own properly so called, —that is, "transgressions of the law;" but his infirmities, say some of them,

whereby he was exposed unto death, his sufferings, say others, are called his sins. But nothing can be more abhorrent from truth and piety than this assertion. For,—

1. If this be so, then the apostle expressly in terms affirms that Christ "offered for his own sins," and that distinctly from "the sins of the people." And from this blasphemy we are left to relieve ourselves by an interpretation that the Scripture nowhere gives countenance unto, namely, that by "sins," infirmities or miseries are intended. It is true that "infirmity," ἀσθένεια, doth sometimes signify sin, or obnoxiousness unto sin; but "sin" doth nowhere signify natural infirmities, but moral evils always. It is true, Christ was "made sin:" but where it is said so, it is also added that it was "for us;" and, to take off all apprehensions of any thing in him that might be so called, that "he knew no sin." He was "made sin for us," when he "offered for the sins of the people;" and other distinct offering for himself he offered none. And therefore in sundry places where mention is made of his offering himself, it is still observed that he "did no sin," but was "as a lamb without blemish and without spot." Let, therefore, men put what interpretation they please on their own words (for they are not the words of the apostle, that "Christ offered himself for his own sins"), the language is, and must be, offensive unto every holy heart, and hath an open appearance of express contradiction unto many other testimonies of the Scripture.

2. The sole reason pretended to give countenance unto this absurd assertion is, that τοῦτο, "this," must answer to the whole preceding proposition, which is its antecedent. Now therein is mention of the priests "offering first for their own sins, then for the sins of the people;" and this, it is said, Christ did,—that is, he offered first for his own sins, and then for the people's. But to answer the whole antecedent, in both parts of it, it is indispensably necessary that he must, as they did, offer two distinct offerings,—one, namely the "first," for himself; and the other, or "then," for the people. For so did they, so were they obliged to do by the law; and other offerings for themselves and the people, in any other order or method, there never were, nor could be. But this is expressly contradictory unto what is here affirmed of the Lord Christ and his offering, namely, that he "offered himself once" only: and if but once, he could not offer "first for himself, then for the people;" nor at all for himself and them in the same offering, which the high priests themselves could not do.

3. This insinuation not only enervates, but is contradictory unto the principal design of the apostle in the verse foregoing, and in that which follows. For verse 26, he on purpose describes our high priest by such properties and

qualifications as might evidence him to have no need to offer for his own sins, as those other priests had; for from this consideration, that "he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," the apostle makes this inference, that "he needeth not to offer for himself, as those high priests did." But according unto this interpretation, no such thing ensues thereon; but notwithstanding all those qualifications, he had need to offer for his own sins. And verse 28, the difference he puts between him and them is this, that they were "men subject to infirmities," but he is "the Son, consecrated for ever:" which apparently exempts him from any necessity of offering for himself; for, as is apparent from the antithesis, he was not subject unto any of those infirmities which made it necessary unto them to offer for themselves. Wherefore the whole design of the apostle in these verses is utterly perverted and overthrown by this interpretation.

4. When those priests offered for their own sins, their sins were of the same nature with the sins of the people: "If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people," Lev. 4:3. If, therefore, this be to be repeated ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ, "this he did when he offered for his own sins and for the people's," "sins" being only expressed in the first place and understood in the latter, sins properly so called must be intended; which is the height of blasphemy.

5. If the Lord Christ offered for himself, or his own infirmities, then those infirmities were such as were obstructions and hinderances unto his offering for others; for that is the only reason why he should offer for their removal or taking away. But this is so far otherwise, as that indeed he was obnoxious unto no infirmity but what was necessary that he might be a meet high priest and sacrifice for us,—for so was every thing that is inseparable from human nature, —which is utterly destructive of this figment.

6. This imagination will admit of no tolerable sense in its exposition or application. For how can we conceive that the Lord Christ offered for his own infirmities; that is, his sorrows, sufferings, and obnoxiousness unto death? It must be by his sufferings and death; for in and by them he offered himself unto God. But this is absurd and foolish: By his sufferings he offered for his sufferings! What he offered for, he took away, as he did the sins of the people; but his own sorrows and sufferings he took not away, but underwent them all.

7. It is contradictory unto the principal maxim of the Socinians with respect unto the priesthood of Christ. For they maintain that his one perfect offering, or expiatory sacrifice, was in heaven only, and not on the earth. But he could

not at his appearance in the holy place offer for his own infirmities and miseries, for they were all past and finished, himself being exalted in immortality and glory.

These things are sufficient to repress the vanity of this figment. But because there is no small danger in the proposal that hath been made of it, I shall briefly examine what reasons its authors and promoters do produce to give countenance unto it.

Thus proceeds and argues Crellius or Schlichtingius on the place: "Peccata proprie dicta, id est, divinarum legum transgressiones, cum in Christo locum non habeant ullum, 1. Necesse est ut in voce 'peccatorum' sit improprietas, significenturque Christi infirmitates et perpessiones, 2. Qua de re jam egimus, cap. 5. ver. 2, 3. 3. Sic vidimus istarum infirmitatum et perpessionum contraria, sanctitatis et innocentiæ nomine paulo ante versu superiore describi; qui duo versiculi mutuo se illustrant: ('seipsum offerens.') 4. Docet quando Christus pro se obtulerit, preces nimirum et supplicationes ut cap. 5. ver. 7, vidimus: tunc nempe cum in eo esset, ut seipsum Deo offerret, cum sese ad oblationem sui ipsius accingeret, hoc est, cum tanquam victima mactaretur. 5. Oblatio enim Christi sic hoc loco extendenda est ut mortem ipsius tanquam necessarium antecedens, et quoddam veluti initium complectatur. 6. Cum vero hic versiculus ex superiori commate pendeat et inferatur, vel hinc apparet, non agi isthic de moribus, sed de natura, deque felici statu ac conditione nostri pontificis. Nec enim ideo Christus opus non habet amplius pro se offerre, quod sanctus sit et inculpatus, ratione morum seu actionum suarum, cum semper talis fuerit; sed quod in perpetuum ab omnibus malis et afflictionibus sit liberatus."

I have transcribed his words at large, because what is offered by others unto the same purpose is all included in them. But the whole of it will be easily removed; for,—

1. The impropriety of speech pretended, that "sins" should be put for "infirmities," is that which the use of the Scripture will give no countenance unto. It is only feigned by these men at their pleasure. Let them, if they can, produce any one place where by "sins," not moral evils, but natural infirmities, are intended. But by feigning improprieties of speech at our pleasure, we may wrest and pervert the Scripture also even as we please.

2. Of the infirmities of the human nature of Christ, which were necessary that he might be a sacrifice, and useful unto his being a priest, we have also treated in the place quoted, chap. 5:2, 3; whereunto the reader is referred.

3. Not the contrary unto these infirmities, but the contrary unto sin original and actual, is intended by "holiness" and "innocency" in the verse foregoing; as hath been proved in the exposition of that verse, whereunto the reader is referred.

4. The Lord Christ offered up prayers and supplications unto God "when he offered up himself;"—not to expiate his own infirmities by his offering, but that he might be carried through and supported in his oblation which he offered for the sins of the people; and had success therein. See the exposition on chap. 5:7.

5. He is more kind than ordinary, in extending the oblation of Christ unto his death also. But he recalls his grant, affirming that he did only prepare himself for his offering thereby. And this also casts his whole exposition into much confusion. Christ "offered himself once," saith the apostle;—ἐφάπαξ, once, and at one time. This, I suppose, is agreed. Then 'he offered for himself and his own sins,' or not at all; for he offered but once, and at one time. Where then did he thus offer himself and when? 'In heaven, upon his ascension,' say the Socinians with one accord. Where then and when did he offer for himself? 'On the earth.' Then he offered himself twice? 'No, by no means; he offered not himself on the earth.' How then did he offer for himself on the earth? 'He did not, indeed, offer himself on the earth, but he prepared himself for his offering on the earth, and therein he offered for himself;'—that is, he did and he did not offer himself upon the earth! For they cannot evade by saying that he did it when he offered up prayers on the earth; for the apostle says expressly in this place, that what he did he did it when he offered himself. And it must be by such an offering as answered the offering of the high priest for himself, which was bloody.

6. The close of his discourse, whereby he would prove the truth of his exposition of the verse foregoing from his interpretation of this, is absurd; as that which would give countenance unto an evident falsehood, from what is more evidently so.

Grotius adds little unto what Schlichtingius offers in this case. Only he tells us that ἁμαρτία is taken for "those griefs which are commonly the punishment of sin, Rom. 6:10." But it is a mistake: ἁμαρτία, in that place, signifies nothing but the guilt of sin, which Christ died to expiate and take away. "He died once for sin;" that is, he suffered once for sin. He says, moreover, that profluvium mulierum is called חַטָּאָה, Lev. 12:8, 15:30; as also is the leprosy, chap. 14:13. But herein also he is mistaken; both the one and the other subject unto those

defiling distempers were appointed to offer a sin-offering for the sins which those defilements were tokens of, and the sin of nature which they proceeded from. Again he says, that "Christ in his offering was freed from those infirmities and miseries per mortem acceleratam." But his death was not hasted one moment until all was finished; nor did he offer for the hastening of his death. And his ensuing words are most ambiguous: "Christ offered pro doloribus istis qui solent peccatorum pœnæ esse, et quos Christus occasione etiam peccatorum humani generis toleravit." If the "sorrows" intended were not true "punishments of sin," they could not be "offered for." And what sorrows Christ underwent, so far as they were penal, he offered for them when he offered for "the sins of the people," and not otherwise. But those which are called "his own sins," must be every way distinct from the sins of the people, and have no relation unto them; as the sins of the high priests of old had not. Wherefore, if by the "occasion of the sins of men," he intend that his sufferings and griefs were for the sins of men, then he offered for them when he offered for the sins of the people, when he bare our sins and sorrows, and had no need to offer distinctly for them as his own. And if it were a sorrow that was not for sin, it cannot be called sin. Christ's suffering on the "occasion of the sins of mankind," is well understood by those who are any way skilled in the Socinian mysteries.

Hammond says the same. "He both," saith he, "offered for himself, that is, made expiation, as it were, not to deliver himself from sin, for he was never guilty of any, but from the infirmities assumed by him, but especially from death itself; and so is now never likely to die, and to determine his Melchisedecian priesthood." Ans. 1. To "make expiation, as it were, from the infirmities assumed by him," or to be "delivered from them," is hard to be understood. 2. Much more is it, how "by death, wherein he offered himself," he should "make expiation to be delivered from death itself." 3. And it is as hard to say, that Christ "offered for himself once by death," that he might die no more; seeing "it is appointed unto all men only once to die."

I have digressed thus far, to crush this novel invention; which, as it is untrue and alien from the sense of the apostle, so it hath in the expression of it an ungrateful sound of impiety. But I expect not so much sobriety, as that, considering the means of its conveyance unto the minds of men at present, it should not be vented again until what hath been here pleaded in its confutation be answered. At present I shall proceed with the exposition of the remainder of the words.

How and what Christ offered for the sins of the people is declared in the words remaining.

Ἐφάπαξ. 1. For the way or manner of it. He did it ἐφάπαξ, "once only." This is directly opposed unto the frequency of the legal sacrifices, repeated "daily" as there was occasion. Those high priests offered καθj ἡμέραν, "daily," on all occasions; he ἐφάπαξ, "once only."

And I cannot but observe by the way, that this assertion of the apostle is no less absolutely exclusive of the missatical sacrifices of the priests of the Roman church than it is of the Levitical sacrifices of the high priest of the church of the Jews. Their expositors on this place do generally affirm, in plea for their church, that they offer it not to make expiation of sins, but only to represent and make application of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. But in their mass itself they speak otherwise, and expressly "offer it to God a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead." Neither yet do we inquire unto what end they do what they do and this is all they say, that they offer the same sacrifice that Christ did, —that is, himself. And this they do a thousand times more frequently than the expiatory sacrifices were among the Jews. Neither were their sacrifices offered properly, by God's appointment, to make atonement for sin by their own virtue and efficacy; but only to be a representation and application of the sacrifice of Christ to come. Whatever ends they therefore fancy unto themselves, by pretending to offer the same sacrifice that Christ did, they contradict the words of the apostle, and wholly evert the force of his argument. For if the same sacrifice which the Lord Christ offered be often offered, and had need so to be, the whole argument to prove the excellency of his priesthood, in that he offered himself but once, above them who often offered the same sacrifices, falls to the ground.

And hence also the foundation of this fiction is rased. For it is, that the Lord Christ offered himself at the supper, the night before he was betrayed, as the Trent council affirms, sess. 22, cap. i. For if he did so, he offered himself more than once,—twice at least; which being a matter of fact, is to give the apostle the lie.

Ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας. 2. What he offered is expressed in the last place; and therein the reason is contained why he offered but once, and needed not to do so daily, as those priests did. And this is taken from the excellency of his offering: he offered ἑαυτόν,—"himself." And this gives the highest preference of the priesthood of Christ above that of Levi. For, (1.) Those priests had nothing

of their own to offer, but must be furnished with offerings from among the other creatures. (2.) Though they had the best from them, the blood and fat, yet it was but the blood of calves, and sheep, and goats. And what can this do for the real expiating of the sins of our souls? See Micah 6:6, 7. Wherefore, when at any time the people were brought under any serious conviction of sin, they could not but apprehend that none of those sacrifices, however multiplied, could deliver them from their guilt. But the Lord Christ had something of his own to offer, that which was originally and absolutely his own, not borrowed or taken from any thing among the creatures. And this was "himself,"—a sacrifice able to make atonement for all the sins of mankind.

And from the words thus expounded we may observe,—

Obs. I. That no sinful man was meet to offer the great expiatory sacrifice for the church; much less is any sinful man fit to offer Christ himself.—As the first part of this assertion declares the insufficiency of the priests of the church of the Jews, so doth the latter the vain pretence of the priests of the church of Rome. The former the apostle proves and confirms expressly. For no other high priest but such a one as was in himself perfectly sinless did become us, or our state and condition. He that was otherwise could neither have any thing of his own to offer, and must in the first place offer for himself; and this he must be doing day by day. And the latter, on many accounts, is a vile, presumptuous imagination. For a poor sinful worm of the earth to interpose himself between God and Christ, and offer the one in sacrifice unto the other,—what an issue is it of pride and folly!

Obs. II. The excellency of Christ's person and priesthood freed him in his offering from many things that the Levitical priesthood was obliged unto.—And the due apprehension hereof is a great guide unto us in the consideration of those types. For many things we shall meet withal which we cannot see how they had a particular accomplishment in Christ, nor find out what they did prefigure. But all of them were such as their own infirm state and condition did require. Such were their outward call and consecration, which they had by the law, in the sacrifice of beasts, with certain washings and unctions; their sacrificing often, and for themselves; their succession one to another; their purifications for legal pollutions. These, and sundry things of like nature, were made necessary unto them from their own sins and infirmities, and so had no particular accomplishment in Christ. However, in general, all the ordinances and institutions about them all, taught the church thus much, that nothing of that was to be found in the true high priest wherein they were defective.

Obs. III. No sacrifice could bring us unto God, and save the church to the utmost, but that wherein the Son of God himself was both priest and offering. —Such a high priest became us, who offered himself once for all. And we may consider, 1. That this was one of the greatest effects of infinite divine wisdom and grace. His incarnation, wherein he had a body prepared for him for this purpose, his call to his office by the oath of the Father and unction of the Spirit, his sanctifying himself to be a sacrifice, and his offering up himself through the eternal Spirit unto God, are all full of mysterious wisdom and grace. All these wonders of wisdom and love were necessary unto this great end of bringing us unto God. 2. Every part of this transaction, all that belongs unto this sacrifice, is so filled up with perfection, that no more could be required on the part of God; nor is any thing wanting, to give countenance unto our unbelief. The person of the priest, and the offering itself, are both the same; both the Son of God. One view of the glory of this mystery, how satisfactory is it unto the souls of believers! 3. A distinct consideration of the person of the priest and of his sacrifice will evidence this truth unto the faith of believers. What could not this priest prevail for, in his interposition on our behalf? Must he not needs be absolutely prevalent in all he aims at? Were our cause intrusted in any other hand, what security could we have that it should not miscarry? And what could not this offering make atonement for? what sin, or whose sins could it not expiate? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Obs. IV. It was burdensome and heavy work, to attain relief against sin and settled peace of conscience under the old priesthood, attended with so many weaknesses and infirmities.—Herein lies the greatest part of that yoke which the apostle Peter affirms that "neither they nor their fathers were able to bear," Acts 15:10; which the Lord Christ gives us deliverance from, Matt. 11:27–30.

Ver. 28.—"For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

The apostle in this verse summeth up the whole of his precedent discourse, so as to evidence the true and proper foundation, which all along he hath built and proceeded on.

1. One principle there was agreed upon between him and the Hebrews who adhered unto Mosaical institutions; and this was, that a high priest over the church there must be, and without such an one there is no approach unto God. So it was under the law; and if the same order be not continued, the church

must needs fall under a great disadvantage. To lose the high priest out of our religion, is to lose the sun out of the firmament of the church. This was a common principle agreed on between them, whereon the apostle doth proceed.

2. He grants unto them that the high priests who officiated in the tabernacle and the temple were called and appointed by God unto their office in the law.

3. Hereon ensued the main difference between him and them. They were persuaded and hoped that these priests should continue for ever in the church, without change or alteration. He contends that there was a time designed wherein they were to be removed, and a priest of another order introduced in their room; which would be so far from being any disadvantage unto the church, as that the whole safety, glory, and blessedness thereof, did depend thereon. And this he proves by many cogent and irrefragable arguments unto them; as,—

(1.) That before the erection of the Levitical priesthood by the law, there was another priest of the most high God, who was far greater and more excellent than those priests, yea, than Abraham himself, from whom they derived all their privileges.

(2.) Because, after the giving of the law and the setting up of the Levitical priesthood thereby, God again promiseth to raise up another priest, in another kind, after another order, after the manner of him who was called unto that office long before the giving of the law. Wherefore he was prefigured before the law, and promised after the law, so that his introduction could not be prejudiced by the law.

(3.) That this high priest, thus promised, neither was to be nor could be of the same stock, nature, or order, with the Levitical priests, but one that was not only distinct from them, but really inconsistent with them. He manifests that there was no possibility they should be priests together, or that the church should be under the conduct of them both.

(4.) Whereas hereon it may be said, 'Who knows whether this change and alteration will be to the advantage of the church or no; whether it were not better to adhere unto those priests which we have already, than, relinquishing them and all benefits by them, to betake ourselves unto this new high priest?' the apostle, in answer unto this possible objection, declares in sundry instances the excellency of this other priest above them. And not only so, but he proves undeniably, that by all which those other priests did perform in divine service, and by all that the law could effect, whereby they were constituted and made

priests, there was no access unto God, no perfection or consummation in peace of conscience, to be obtained. For there were so many defects and weaknesses that accompanied them and their services, as rendered them wholly unable to attain those great ends. On the other hand, he manifesteth and proveth, that by this one single high priest now introduced, and his one sacrifice, offered once for all, by reason of the perfection of the one and the other, all those blessed ends were completely accomplished.

This being the design of the apostle's discourse in this chapter, he giveth us a summary of the whole, and of the principal grounds which he proceeds upon, with wonderful brevity, in this last verse. For upon an acknowledgment of the different principles mentioned, he shows us, in an elegant antithesis,—1. The different means of the constitution of these different priests: on the one hand, the law; and on the other, the word of the oath. 2. The different times of their constitution: the one in the giving of the law; the other after the law. 3. The difference of their persons: those of the first sort were men, and no more; the other was the Son. 4. The difference in their state and condition: the former had infirmities; the latter is consecrated for ever. This also is included in the words, that those of the first sort were many ("men that have infirmity"); he of the latter was one only. And in these things, as we shall briefly see, lie the springs of all the arguments which the apostle hath used in this case, and a plain representation is given us of the truth he contended for.

Ὁ νόμος. 1. The first difference is in the constituting principles of these distinct offices: That on the part of the Levitical priesthood was ὁ νόμος,—"the law;" that is, the ceremonial law, as we call it,—the law given in Horeb concerning religious rites, the way and manner of the solemn worship of God in the tabernacle. It was not the moral law, not immediately the commands of the decalogue, but the especial law of divine service and worship, that is intended.

Καθίστησι. And what doth the law do? Καθίστησι, "It appointeth." It did so morally; God appointed them in and by the law. And he speaks in the present tense: 'So long as the law continueth in force and efficacy it appointeth such priests. None other are to be looked for in or expected from the law.' Now, a moral rule or institution is sufficient to convey power and authority of office unto men. So is it under the new testament. It is the gospel that makes ministers, and not the people, or any others, who have no power but only to act in obedience unto the laws thereof. Hereby those other priests came so to be.

Λόγος τῆς ὁρκωμοσίας. Hereunto is opposed λόγος τῆς ὁρκωμοσίας, "the word of the oath," as the constituting cause of this new priest and priesthood. Thus much it had in common with the other way; it was a "word," as that was also. The law was λόγος λαληθεὶς διj ἀγγέλων, "the word spoken by angels," Heb. 2:2;—the word of God, though spoken by them. And a word in this sense is either a mere word of command or a word of promise; either of which is sufficient to constitute an office, being declarations of the authority of God himself. By this word was both the office of the priesthood of Christ consecrated, and himself called to be a priest. See the exposition on chap. 5:5, 6. But herein especially did this word excel the word of the law, in that it was confirmed by the oath of God. It was the word, the will, the promise of God, declared in and by his oath. And herein hath it many advantages above the law, which was not so; as,—

(1.) A high federal solemnity. Things confirmed by an oath are peculiarly sacred, and are distinguished from all things that are not so; and therefore the interposition of an oath was originally (it may be solely) used in the confirmation of covenants about things of moment, and wherein several parties were highly concerned.

(2.) An oath declares the immutability of that counsel whence the matter sworn unto doth proceed. In the giving of the law, God declared his will, so far as to what he would have the people at present obliged unto; but he did not by any means declare that he had in his unchangeable counsel determined that the kind of worship and state of the church then erected should continue for ever; yea, he did many ways intimate that he did reserve unto himself the power of altering the whole. But now the immutability of God's counsel is declared by his oath. What was this oath of God, and how the Lord Christ was made a priest thereby, hath been before at large declared. The apostle takes notice of it here only as it was given out in prophecy by David; which was but a solemn declaration of the eternal compact between the Father and the Son.

Μετὰ τὸν νόμον. 2. The difference of the time wherein these priesthoods were ordained is included on the one hand and expressed on the other. For the former, it was when the law was given whereby they were made priests: the latter was μετὰ τὸν νόμον, "after the law," or the giving of it. This, I confess, doth not appear at first view to be to the advantage of the apostle's design, namely, that this oath was after the law; for in another place he expressly argues on the other hand, that what is first in such cases hath the pre-eminence, and cannot be disannulled by what doth ensue: Gal. 3:17, "And this I say, that the covenant,

that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." May it not be as well said, that this oath, which was declared about four hundred years after the giving of the law, could not disannul it, or make it of none effect? The objection being not without its difficulty, I shall spend a little time in the full solution of it. I answer, therefore, that what followeth after cannot disannul what went before,—

(1.) If that which is afterwards introduced be consistent with what was before established. For in that case there is no intimation of the pleasure of God that it should be disannulled. He may add what he will unto what is already ordained, so it be consistent with it, without prejudicing the first institution.

(2.) Especially it cannot do so if it be inferior unto that which went before, either in dignity or use and benefit, and so be made subservient unto it.

(3.) And it must be invalid unto any such purpose if it had no other antecedent foundation, that did indeed precede the former grant: for if it have so, it may rationally be supposed to be further declared on purpose to supersede it.

Now thus it was with the law in respect unto the promise, which, as the apostle proves, going before it, could not be disannulled by it. For,—

(1.) The law, as it was then ordained of God, was consistent with the promise, yea, and given in the pursuit of it; so as that there was no need that any should forsake the promise to comply with the will of God in giving the law.

(2.) The law, as it was inferior in dignity and use unto the promise, so it was made subordinate and subservient unto it; for the main end of giving the law, was to guide and direct the church unto the right use and benefit of the promise.

(3.) The promise had an absolute priority above the law. There was no ground or foundation laid for the law, no intimation of its future introduction, before the giving of the promise: and therefore the promise could not be disannulled by it.

But in the present case all things are otherwise; for,—

(1.) The priesthood confirmed by an oath, and introduced after the law, was utterly inconsistent with the law and the priesthood thereof. This the apostle hath fully proved before. Wherefore of necessity either the law and the

priesthood of it must be disannulled, or the oath of God must be of none effect; for what he had sworn unto was inconsistent with the continuance of what was before appointed for a time.

(2.) This new priesthood could no way be made subordinate or subservient unto the other, so as to leave it a place in the church; but as it was eminently above it in dignity and benefit, so the use of the other was only to be an introduction unto it, and therefore must cease thereon.

(3.) This priesthood had its reasons, grounds, foundation, and representation, long before the giving of the law. For besides that it had a virtual constitution in the first promise, two thousand years before the giving of the law, it had also a typical representation before it, in the priesthood of Melchisedec; and it received only a declaration and confirmation in the account given of the oath of God after the law.

Wherefore the direct contrary is here the matter in hand unto what is spoken unto in that other argument of the apostle. And therein the first thing, namely, the promise, was confirmed by an oath; the latter was not. But here the latter, which was after the law, was confirmed by the oath of God; which the law was not. And hereon its being after the law is a sufficient evidence of its preeminence above the law, and all the institutions of it; for hereby was that introduced which was to supply all the defects and weaknesses of the law and its priesthood, and so to disannul them and take them out of the way.

Ἀνθρώπους. 3. The third difference is, that the law made ἀνθρώπους, "men," to be high priests; that is, those who were mere men, and no more. And therefore, notwithstanding the office and dignity which they were called and exalted unto, they were all but servants in the house of God; nor could they be any other, as the apostle proves, Heb. 3:5. Υἱόν. In opposition hereunto, "the word of the oath maketh Υἱόν," "the Son," an high priest; that Son who is Lord over the whole house, and whose the house is, as he declares in the same place, verses 5, 6. And in this word the apostle openeth the necessity and dignity of the priesthood of the new testament; for it consists in the dignity of the person designed unto that office. This was no other, nor could be other, but the Son, the eternal Son of God. "Filium, nempe Dei, non hominem, cæteris parem, nascendi sorte," saith Grotius; as though Christ were here called "the Son," that is, the Son of God, because he was differenced from other men in the way and manner of his birth, being born of a virgin. But this is not the true and formal reason of this denomination. Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation;

and thereon alone doth his sonship depend. But many ways there were whereby he was manifested so to be, especially by his miraculous conception and nativity, and by his resurrection from the dead. Hence with respect unto them he is sometimes called the Son of God; not that he became so thereby, but was only "declared" so to be. This, therefore, the apostle resolves the force of his argument into, namely, the dignity of the person of our high priest, he was the Son of God; for hereon the whole excellency and efficacy of his priesthood doth depend.

Ἔχοντας ἀσθένειαν. 4. It is added, in the last place, that the law made men priests ἐχοντας ἀσθένειαν,—"that had infirmity,"—subject to infirmities. And these were of two sorts, moral and natural; neither could they be freed from either of them during the whole time of their priesthood. The first were their sins: hence they were obliged continually to offer sacrifice for their own sins, and that to the very last day of their lives. The sum and issue of their natural weakness was death itself. This seized on every one of them, so as to put an everlasting end unto their sacerdotal administrations.

But wherefore did the law make such priests, men, mere men, that had infirmity, subject to sin and death, so as to put an end unto their office? The reason is, because it could neither find any better, nor make them any better whom it found in that condition. The law must be content with such as were to be had, and in itself it had no power to make them better.

Τετελειωμένον εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. In opposition hereunto it is said, "the word of the oath made the Son, τετελειωμένον εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα,"—"consecrated for ever." What was the consecration of the Lord Christ unto his office, and wherein it did consist, I have before at large declared. That which the apostle intends here, in an especial manner, is his absolute freedom from the infirmities which those other priests were obnoxious unto,—namely, such infirmities in the first place as with respect whereunto sacrifice was to be offered unto God; that is, their own sins. And the apostle here, opposing the consecration of Christ unto their having infirmities, showeth sufficiently that he intended not to insinuate that he offered for any infirmities of his own, seeing he is wholly different from them and opposed unto them who had such infirmities. And if he had offered for his own infirmities, the apostle could not have objected it as the weakness of the law, that it made priests which had infirmity; for, in that sense, the word of the oath should have done so also. But whereas his exaltation into heaven for the discharge of the remaining duties of his priesthood, in his intercession for

the church, belonged unto the perfection of his consecration, he was therein also freed from all those natural infirmities which were necessary unto him that he might be a sacrifice. The ensuing observations offer themselves unto us:—

Obs. V. There never was, nor ever can be, any more than two sorts of priests in the church; the one made by the law, the other by the oath of God. Wherefore,—

Obs. VI. As the bringing in of the priesthood of Christ after the law and the priesthood constituted thereby, did abrogate and disannul it; so the bringing in of another priesthood after his will abrogate and disannul that also. And therefore,—

Obs. VII. Plurality of priests under the gospel overthrows the whole argument of the apostle in this place; and if we have yet priests that have infirmities, they are made by the law, and not by the gospel.

Obs. VIII. The sum of the difference between the law and the gospel is issued in the difference between the high priest of the one and the other state; which is inconceivable.

Obs. IX. The great foundation of our faith, and the hinge whereon all our consolation depends, is this, that our high priest is the Son of God.

Obs. X. The everlasting continuance of the Lord Christ in his office is secured by the oath of God.

Μόνω τῶ Θεῶ δόξα.