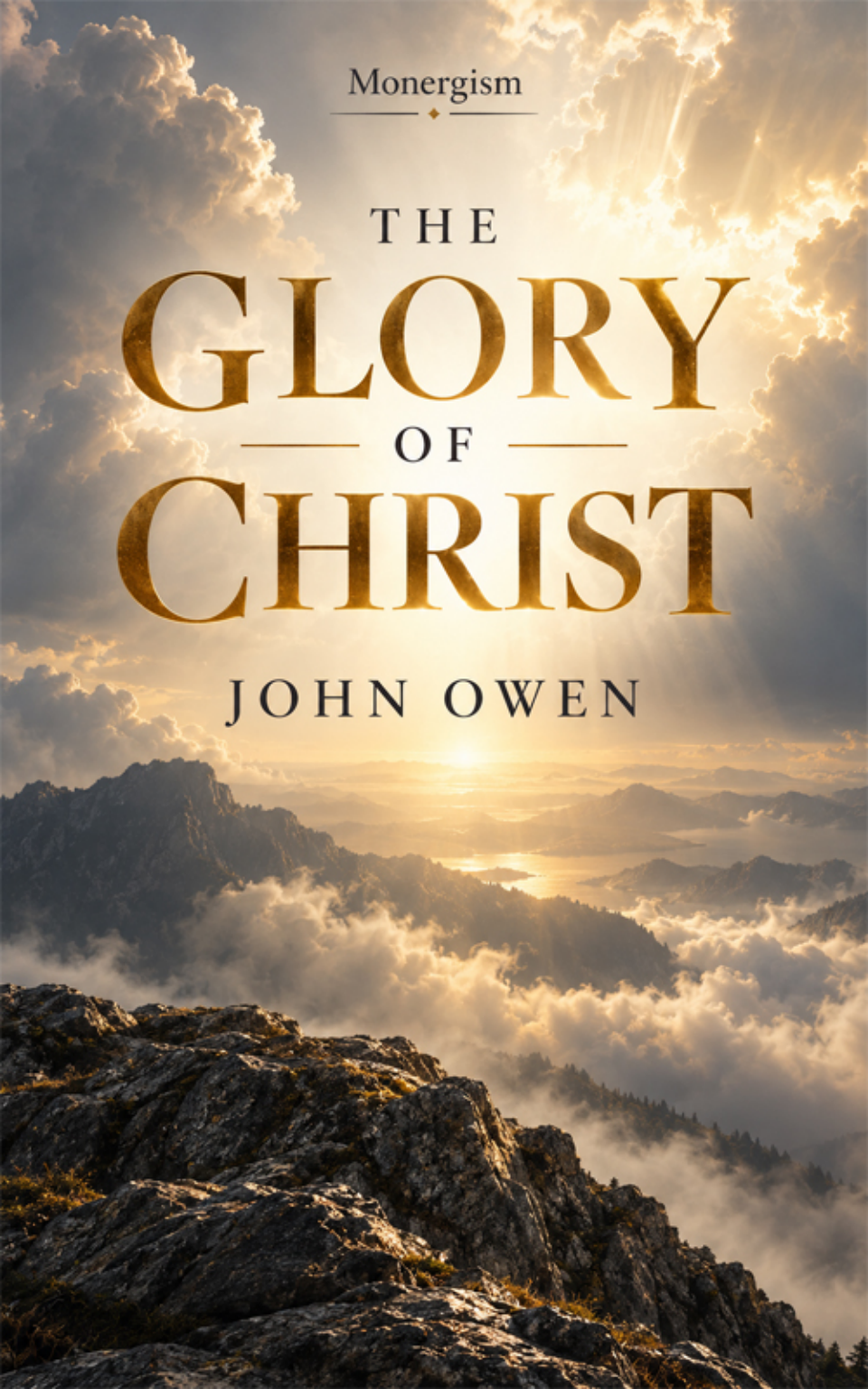




Monergism

THE
GLORY
— OF —
CHRIST

JOHN OWEN

MONERGISM BOOKS

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

JOHN OWEN

1616–1683

The Glory of Christ

by John Owen

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Prefatory Note

The following treatise may be regarded as a series of Discourses on John 17:24. The subject is the Glory of Christ, as the representative of God to the church, – in the mystery of his Person, – in his office as Mediator, – in his exaltation on high, – in his relation to the church during every age of its history, – and in the final consummation of his work, when all things are to be gathered into a blessed unity, as the result of his mediation. The treatise is concluded by a statement of the difference between our views of the Glory of Christ as beheld by faith in this world, and as it shall be beheld by sight in heaven.

It is not professedly a sequel to the work of the author on the Person of Christ; though, from some expressions in the Preface to these Meditations, they may be regarded in this light. Several of them are evidently an expansion of certain thoughts and views, of which the germ will be found in the preceding work. The two works are, indeed, so closely connected, that they have been often published together. It has been thought proper, therefore, to adhere to this arrangement in the present republication of Dr. Owen's Works.

There are some facts which impart peculiar interest to these Meditations. They were drawn up, according to the author's own statement, "for the exercise of his own mind," in the first instance; and illustrate, accordingly, the scope and tenor of his Christian experience. They form, moreover, his dying testimony to the truth, – and to the truth, with peculiar emphasis, as it "is in Jesus;" for they are the substance of the last instructions which he delivered to his flock; and they constitute the last work which he prepared for the press. It is instructive to peruse the solemn musings of his soul when "weakness, weariness, and the near approaches of death," were calling him away from his earthly labours; and to mark how intently his thoughts were fixed on the glory of the Saviour, whom he was soon to behold "*face to face*." On the day of his death, Mr Parne, who had the charge of the original publication of this treatise, on bidding Dr Owen farewell, said to him, "Doctor, I have just been putting your

book on the Glory of Christ to the press”. “I am glad,” was Owen ’s reply, “to hear that that performance is put to the press; but, O brother Payne, the long looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done yet, or was capable of doing in this world.”

Mr Hervey thus expresses his admiration of this work: “To see the Glory of Christ is the grand blessing which our Lord solicits and demands for his disciples in his last solemn intercession, John 17: 24. Should the reader desire assistance in this important work, I would refer him to a little treatise of Dr Owen ’s, entitled ‘Meditations on the Glory of Christ; ’ it is little in size, – not so in value. Were I to speak of it in the classical style, I should call it *aureus, gemmeus, mellitus*. But I would rather say, it is richly replenished with that unction from the Hole One which tends to enlighten the eyes and cheer the heart; which sweetens the enjoyments of life, softens the hours of death, and prepares for the fruitions of eternity.” – Teron and Aspasio, vol. 3 p. 75.

The treatise was published in 1684. It was reprinted in 1696, with the addition of two chapters which were found among the papers of Owen, and in his own handwriting, though too late for insertion in the first edition of the work. – Ed.

Preface to the Reader

Christian Reader,

To design of the ensuing Discourse is to declare some part of that glory of our Lord Jesus Christ which is revealed in the Scripture, and proposed as the principal object of our faith, love, delight, and admiration. But, alas! after our utmost and most diligent inquiries, we must say, How little a portion is it of him that we can understand! His glory is incomprehensible, and his praises are unutterable. Some things an illuminated mind may conceive of it; but what we can express in comparison of what it is in itself, is even less than nothing. But as for those who have forsaken the only true guide herein, endeavouring to be wise above what is written, and to raise their contemplations by fancy and imagination above Scripture revelation (as many have done), they have darkened counsel without knowledge, uttering things which they understand not, which have no substance or spiritual food of faith in them.

Howbeit, that real view which we may have of Christ and his glory in this world by faith, – however weak and obscure that knowledge which we may attain of them by divine revelation, – is inexpressibly to be preferred above all other wisdom, understanding, or knowledge whatever. So it is declared by him who will be acknowledged a competent judge in these things. “Yea, doubtless,” saith he, *“I count all these things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”* He who does not so has no part in him.

The revelation made of Christ in the blessed gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness, than the whole creation and the just comprehension of it, if attainable, can contain or afford. Without the knowledge hereof, the mind of man, however priding itself in other inventions and discoveries, is wrapp’d up in darkness and confusion.

This, therefore, deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and our utmost diligence in them. For if our future blessedness shall consist in being where he is, and beholding of his

glory, what better preparation can there be for it than in a constant preview contemplation of that glory in the revelation that is made in the Gospel, unto this very end, that by a view of it we may be gradually transformed into the same glory?

I shall not, therefore, use any apology for the publishing of the ensuing Meditations, intended first for the exercise of my own mind, and then for the edification of a private congregation; which is like to be the last service I shall do them in that kind. Some may, by the consideration of them, be called to attend unto the same duty with more diligence than formerly, and receive directions for the discharge of it; and some may be provoked to communicate their greater light and knowledge unto the good of many. And that which I design farther in the present Discourse, is to give a brief account of the necessity and use, in life and death, of the duty exhorted unto.

Particular motives unto the diligent discharge of this duty will be pressed in the Discourse itself. Here some things more general only shall be premised. For all persons not immersed in sensual pleasures, – not overdrenched in the love of this world and present things, – who have any generous or noble thought about their own nature, being, and end, – are under the highest obligation to retake themselves unto this contemplation of Christ and his glory. Without this, they shall never attain true rest or satisfaction in their own minds. He it is alone in whom the race of mankind may boast and glory, on whom all its felicities do depend. For, –

I. He it is in whom our nature, which was debased as low as hell by apostasy from God, is exalted above the whole creation. Our nature, in the original constitution of it, in the persons of our first parents, was crowned with honour and dignity. The image of God, wherein it was made, and the dominion over the lower world wherewith it was entrusted, made it the seat of excellence, of beauty, and of glory. But of them all it was at once divested and made naked by sin, and laid grovelling in the dust from whence it was taken. *“Dust thou are, and to dust thou shalt return,”* was its righteous doom. And all its internal faculties were invaded by deformed lusts, – everything that might render the whole unlike unto God, whose image it had lost. Hence it became the contempt of angels, the dominion of Satan; who, being the enemy of the whole creation, never had any thing or place to reign in but the debased nature of man. Nothing was

now more vile and base; its glory was utterly departed. It had both lost its peculiar nearness unto God, which was its honour, and was fallen into the greatest distance from him of all creatures, the devils only excepted; which was its ignominy and shame. And in this state, as unto anything in itself, it was left to perish eternally.

In this condition – lost, poor, base, yea, cursed – the Lord Christ, the Son of God, found our nature. And hereon, in infinite condescension and compassion, sanctifying a portion of it unto himself, he took it to be his own, in a holy, ineffable subsistence, in his own person. And herein again the same nature, so depressed into the utmost misery, is exalted above the whole creation of God. For in that very nature, God has *“set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”* This is that which is so celebrated by the Psalmist, with the highest admiration, Ps. 8: 3-8. This is the greatest privilege we have among all our fellow- creatures, – this we may glory in, and value ourselves upon. Those who engage this nature in the service of sensual lusts and pleasures, who think that its felicity and utmost capacities consist in their satisfaction, with the accomplishment of other earthly, temporal desires, – are satisfied with it in its state of apostasy from God; but those who have received the light of faith and grace, so as rightly to understand the being and end of that nature whereof they are partakers, cannot but rejoice in its deliverance from the utmost debasement, into that glorious exaltation which it has received in the person of Christ. And this must needs make thoughts of him full of refreshment unto their souls. Let us take care of our persons, – the glory of our nature is safe in him.

For, –

II. In him the relation of our nature unto God is eternally secured. We were created in a covenant relation unto God. Our nature was related unto him in a way of friendship, of likeness, and complacency. But the bond of this relation and union was quickly broken, by our apostasy from him. Hereon our whole nature became to be at the utmost moral distance from God, and enmity against him; which is the depth of misery. But God, in infinite wisdom and grace, did design once more to recover it, and take it again near unto himself. And he would do it in such a way as should render it utterly

impossible that there would ever be a separation between him and it any more. Heaven and earth may pass away, but there shall never be a dissolution of the union between God and our nature any more. He did it, therefore, by assuming it into a substantial union with himself, in the person of the Son. Hereby the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in it bodily, or substantially, and eternally. Hereby is its relation unto God eternally secured. And among all the mysterious excellencies which relate hereunto, there are two which continually present themselves unto our consideration.

1. That this nature of ours is capable of this glorious exaltation and subsistence in God. No creature could conceive how omnipotent wisdom, power, and goodness, could actuate themselves unto the production of this effect. The mystery hereof is the object of the admiration of angels, and will be so of the whole church, unto all eternity. What is revealed concerning the glory, way, and manner of it, in the Scripture, I have declared in my treatise concerning the Mystery of Godliness, or the Person of Christ. What mind can conceive, what tongue can express, who can sufficiently admire, the wisdom, goodness, and condescension of God herein? And whereas he has proposed unto us this glorious object of our faith and meditation, how vile and foolish are we, if we spend our thoughts about other things in a neglect of it!

2. This is also an ineffable pledge of the love of God unto our nature. For although he will not take it in any other instance, save that of the man Christ Jesus, into this relation with himself, by virtue of personal union, yet therein he has given a glorious pledge of his love unto, and valuation of, that nature. For “*verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*” And this kindness extends unto our persons, as participant of that nature. For he designed this glory unto the man Christ Jesus, that might be the firstborn of the new creation, that we might be made conformable unto him according to our measure; and as the members of that body, whereof he is the head, we are participant in this glory.

III. It is he in whom our nature has been carried successfully and victoriously through all the oppositions that it is liable unto, and even death itself. But the glory hereof I shall speak unto distinctly in its proper place, which follows, and therefore shall here pass it by.

IV. He it is who in himself has given us a pledge of the capacity of our nature to inhabit those blessed regions of light, which are far above these visible heavens. Here we dwell in tabernacles of clay, that are “crushed before the moth,” – such as cannot be raised, so as to abide one foot-breadth above the earth we tread upon. The heavenly luminaries which we can behold appear too great and glorious for our cohabitation. We are as grasshoppers in our own eyes, in comparison of those gigantic beings; and they seem to dwell in places which would immediately swallow up and extinguish our natures. How, then, shall we entertain an apprehension of being carried and exalted above them all? to have an everlasting subsistence in places incomprehensibly more glorious than the orbs wherein they reside? What capacity is there in our nature of such a habitation? But hereof the Lord Christ has given us a pledge in himself. Our nature in him is passed through these visible heavens, and is exalted far above them. Its eternal habitation is in the blessed regions of light and glory; and he has promised that where he is, there we shall be, and that for ever.

Other encouragements there are innumerable to stir us up unto diligence in the discharge of the duty here proposed, – namely, a continual contemplation of the glory of Christ, in his person, office, and grace. Some of them, the principal of them which I have any acquaintance with, are represented in the ensuing Discourse. I shall therefore here add the peculiar advantage which we may obtain in the diligent discharge of this duty; which is, – *that it will carry us cheerfully, comfortably, and victoriously through life and death, and all that we have to conflict withal in either of them.*

And let it be remembered, that I do here suppose what is written on this subject in the ensuing Discourse as being designed to prepare the minds of the readers for the due improvement of it.

As unto this *present life*, it is well known what it is unto the most of them who concern themselves in these things. Temptations, afflictions changes, sorrows, dangers, fears, sickness, and pains, do fill up no small part of it. And on the other hand, all our earthly relishes, refreshments, and comfort, are uncertain, transitory, and unsatisfactory; all things of each sort being embittered by the remainders of sin. Hence everything wherein we are concerned has the root of trouble and sorrow in it. Some labour under wants,

poverty, and straits all their days; and some have very few hours free from pains and sickness. And all these things, with others of an alike nature, are heightened at present be the calamitous season wherein our lot is fallen. All things almost in situations are filled with confusions, disorders, dangers, distresses, and troubles; wars and rumours of wars do abound, with tokens of farther approaching judgements; distress of nations, with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. There is in many places *"no peace unto him that goes out, nor to him that cometh in, but great vexations are on the inhabitants of the world: nation is destroyed of nation, and city of city; for God does vex them with all adversity."* [2 Chron. 15: 5,6.] And in the meantime, vexation with the ungodly deeds of wicked men does greatly further the troubles of life; the sufferings of many also for the testimony of their consciences are deplorable, with the divisions and animosities that abound amongst all sorts of Christians.

But the shortness, the vanity, the miseries of human life, have been the subject of the complains of all sort of considering persons, heathens as well as Christians; nor is it my present business to insist upon them. My inquire is only after the relief which we may obtain against all these evils, that we faint not under them, that we may have the victory over them.

This in general is declared by the apostle 2 Cor. 4, *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."* But for this cause *"we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Our beholding by faith things that see not seen, things spiritual and eternal, will alienate all our afflictions, – make their burden light, and preserve our souls from fainting under them. Of these things the glory of Christ, whereof we treat, is the principal, and in due sense comprehensive of them all. For we behold the glory of God himself *"in the face of Jesus Christ."* He that can at all times retreat unto the contemplation of this glory, will be carried above the perplexing

prevailing sense of any of these evils, of a confluence of them all. "*Crus nil sentit in nervo, dum animus est in coelo.*"

It is a woeful kind of life, when men scramble for poor perishing reliefs in their distresses. This is the universal remedy and cure, – the only balsam for all our diseases. Whatever presses, urges, perplexes, if we can but retreat in our minds unto a view of this glory, and a due consideration of our own interest therein, comfort and support will be administered unto us. Wicked men, in their distress (which sometimes overtake even them also), are like "*a troubled sea, that cannot rest.*" Others are heartless, and despond, – not without secret repinings at the wise disposals of Divine Providence, especially when they look on the better condition (as they suppose) of others. And the best of us all are apt to wax faint and weary when these things press upon us in an unusual manner, or under their long continuance, without a prospect of relief. This is the stronghold which such prisoners of hope are to turn themselves unto. In this contemplation of the glory of Christ they will find rest unto their own souls. For, –

1. It will herein, and in the discharge of this duty, be made evident how slight and inconsiderable all these things are from whence our troubles and distresses do arise. For they all grow on this root of an over-valuation of temporal things. And unless we can arrive unto a fixed judgement that all things here below are transitory and perishing, reaching only unto the outward man, or the body, (perhaps unto the killing of it), – that the best of them have nothing that is truly substantial or abiding in them, – that there are other things, wherein we have an assured interest, that are incomparably better than they, and above them, – it is impossible but that we must spend our lives in fears, sorrows, and distractions. One real view of the glory of Christ, and of our own concernment therein, will give us a full relief in this matter. For what are all the things of this life? What is the good or evil of them in comparison of an interest in this transcendent glory? When we have due apprehensions hereof, – when our minds are possessed with thoughts of it, – when our affections reach out after its enjoyments, – let pain, and sickness, and sorrows, and fears, and dangers, and death, say what they will. we shall have in readiness wherewith to combat with them and overcome them; and that on this consideration, that they are all outward, transitory, and

passing away, whereas our minds are fixed on those things which are eternal, and filled with incomprehensible glory.

2. The minds of men are apt by their troubles to be cast into disorder, to be tossed up and down, and disquieted with various affections and passions. So the Psalmist found it in himself in the time of his distress; whence he calls himself unto that account, *‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me?’* And, indeed, the mind on all such occasions is its own greatest troubler. It is apt to let loose its passions of fear and sorrow, which act themselves in innumerable perplexing thoughts, until it is carried utterly out of its own power. But in this state a due contemplation of the glory of Christ will restore and compose the mind, bring it into a sedate, quiet frame, wherein faith will be able to say unto the winds and waves of distempered passions, *“Peace, be still;”* and they shall obey it.

3. It is the way and means of conveying a sense of God’s love unto our souls; which is that alone where ultimately we find rest in the midst of all the troubles of this life; as the apostle declares, Rom. 5: 2-5. It is the Spirit of God who alone communicates a sense of this love unto our souls; it is *“shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”* Howbeit, there are ways and means to be used on our part, whereby we may be disposed and made meet to receive these communications of divine love. Among these the principal is the contemplation of the glory of Christ insisted on, and of God the Father in him. It is the season, it is the way and means, at which and whereby the Holy Ghost will give a sense of the love of God unto us, causing us thereon to *“rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* This will be made evident in the ensuing Discourse. This will lift the minds and hearts of believers above all the troubles of this life, and is the sovereign antidote that will expel all the poison that is in them; which otherwise might perplex and enslave their souls.

I have but touched on these things, as designing to enlarge somewhat on that which does ensue. And this is the advantage we may have in the discharge of this duty with respect unto death itself: It is the assiduous contemplation of the glory of Christ which will carry us cheerfully and comfortably into it, and through it. My principal work having been now for a long season to die daily, as living in a continual expectation of my dissolution, I shall on this

occasion acquaint the reader with some few of my thoughts and reliefs with reference unto death itself.

There are sundry things required of us, that we may be able to encounter death cheerfully, constantly, and victoriously. For want of these, or some of them, I have known gracious souls who have lived in a kind of bondage for fear of death all their days. We know not how God will manage any of our minds and souls in that season, in that trial; for he acts towards us in all such things in a way of sovereignty. But these are the things which he requires of us in way of duty: –

First, Peculiar actings of faith to resign and commit our departing souls into the hand of him who is able to receive them, to keep and preserve them, as also to dispose of them into a state of rest and blessedness, are required of us.

The soul is now parting with all things here below, and that for ever. None of all the things which it has seen, heard, or enjoyed, be it outward senses, can be prevailed with to stay with it one hour, or to take one step with it in the voyage wherein it is engaged. It must alone by itself launch into eternity. It is entering an invisible world, which it knows no more of than it has received by faith. None has come from the dead to inform us of the state of the other world; yea, God seems on purpose so to conceal it from us, that we should have no evidence of it, at least as unto the manner of things in it, but what is given unto faith by divine revelation. Hence those who died and were raised again from the dead unto any continuance among men, as Lazarus, probably knew nothing of the invisible state. Their souls were preferred by the power of God in their being, but bound up as unto present operations. This made a great emperor cry out, on the approach of death, “*O animula, tremula, vagula, blandula; quae nunc abibis in loca horrida, squalida*”, &c. – “O poor, trembling, wandering soul, into what places of darkness and defilement art thou going?”

How is it like to be after the few moments which, under the pangs of death, we dare to continue in this world? Is it an annihilation that lies at the door? Is death the destruction of our whole being, so as that after it we shall be no more? So some would have the state of things to be. Is it a state of subsistence in a wandering condition, up and down the world, under the influence of other more powerful spirits

that rule in the air, visiting tombs and solitary places, and sometimes making appearances of themselves by the impressions of those more powerful spirits; as some imagine from the story concerning Samuel and the witch of Endor, and as it is commonly received in the Papacy, out of a compliance with their imagination of purgatory? Or is it a state of universal misery and woe? A state incapable of comfort or joy? Let them pretend what they please, who can understand no comfort or joy in this life but what they receive by their senses; – they can look for nothing else. And whatever be the state of this invisible world, the soul can undertake nothing of its own conduct after its departure from the body. It knows that it must be absolutely at the disposal of another.

Wherefore no man can comfortably venture on and into this condition, but in the exercise of that faith which enables him to resign and give up his departing soul into the hand of God, who alone is able to receive it, and to dispose it into a condition of rest and blessedness. So speaks the apostle, *“I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him again that day.”*

Herein, as in all other graces, is our Lord Jesus Christ our great example. He resigned his departing spirit into the hands of his Father, to be owned and preserved by him, in its state of separation: *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,”* Luke 23:46; as did the Psalmist, his type, in an alike condition, Ps. 31:5. But the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ herein, – the object and exercise of it, what he believed and trusted unto in this resignation of his spirit into the hand of God, – is at large expressed in the 16th Psalm. *“I have,”* said he, *“set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”* He left his soul in the hand of God, in full assurance that it should suffer no evil in its state of separation, but should be brought again with his body into a blessed resurrection and eternal glory. So Stephen resigned his soul, departing under violence, into the hands of Christ himself. When he died he said, *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”*

This is the last victorious act of faith, wherein its conquest over its last enemy death itself does consist. Herein the soul says in and unto itself, “Thou art now taking leave of time unto eternity; all things about thee are departing as shades, and will immediately disappear. The things which thou art entering into are yet invisible; such as *‘eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor will they enter into the heart of man fully to conceive.’* Now, therefore, with quietness and confidence give up thyself unto the sovereign power, grace, truth, and faithfulness of God, and thou shalt find assured rest and peace.”

But Jesus Christ it is who does immediately receive the souls of them who believe in him. So we see in the instance of Stephen. And what can be a greater encouragement to reign them into his hands, than a daily contemplation of his glory, in his person, his power, his exaltation, his office, and grace? Who that believes in him, that belongs unto him, can fear to commit his departing spirit unto his love, power, and care? Even we also shall hereby in our dying moments see by faith heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God ready to receive us. This, added unto the love which all believers have unto the Lord Jesus, which is inflamed by contemplation of his glory, and their desires to be with him where he is, will strengthen and confine our minds in the resignation of our departing souls into his hand.

Secondly, It is required in us, unto the same end, that we be ready and willing to part with the flesh, wherewith we are clothed, with all things that are woeful and desirable thereunto. The alliance, the relation, the friendship, the union that are between the soul and the body, are the greatest, the nearest, the firmest that are or can be among mere created beings. There is nothing like it, – nothing equal unto it. The union of three persons in the one single divine nature, and the union of two natures in one person of Christ, are infinite, ineffable, and exempted from all comparison. But among created beings, the union of these two essential parts of the same nature in one person is most excellent. Nor is anything equal to it, or like it, found in any other creatures. Those who among them have most of life have either no body, as angels; or no souls but what perish with them, as all brute creatures below.

Angels, being pure, immaterial spirits, have nothing in them, nothing belonging unto their essence, that can die. Beasts have

nothing in them that can live when their bodies die. The soul of a beast cannot be preserved in a separate condition, no, not by an act of almighty power; for it is not, and that which is not cannot live. It is nothing but the body itself in an act of its material powers.

Only the nature of man, in all the works of God, is capable of this convulsion. The essential parts of it are separable by death, the one continuing to exist and act its especial powers in a separate state or condition. The powers of the whole entire nature, acting in soul and body in conjunction, are all scattered and lost by death. But the powers of one essential part of the same nature – that is, of the soul – are preserved after death in a more perfect acting and exercise than before. This is peculiar unto human nature, as a mean partaking of heaven and earth, – of the perfection of angels above, and of the imperfection of the beasts below. Only there is this difference in these things: – Our participation of the heavenly, spiritual perfections of the angelical nature is for eternity; our participation of the imperfections of the animate creatures here below is but for a season. For God hath designed our bodies unto such a glorious refinement at the resurrection, as that they shall have no more alliance unto that brutish nature which perishes forever; for we shall be “*isangeloi*”- like unto angels, or equal to them. Our bodies shall no more be capable of those acts and operations which are now common to us with other living creatures here below.

This is the pre-eminence of the nature of man, as the wise man declares. For unto that objection of atheistical Epicureans, “As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to the dust again,” – he grants that, as unto their bodies, it is for a season in them we have a present participation of their nature; but, says he, here lies the difference, “*Who knows the spirit of a man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?*” Eccles. 3: 21. Unless we know this, unless we consider the different state of the spirit of men and beasts, we cannot be delivered from this atheism; but the thoughts hereof will set us at liberty from it. They die in like manner, and their bodies go equally to the dust for a season; but the beast hath no spirit, no soul, but what dies with the body and goes to the dust. If they had, their bodies also must be raised again unto a conjunction with them;

otherwise, death would produce a new race of creatures unto eternity. But man hath an immortal soul, saith he, a heavenly spirit, which, when the body goes in the dust for a season, ascends to heaven (where the guilt of sin and the curse of the law interpose not), from whence it is there to exist and to act all its native powers in a state of blessedness.

But, as I said, by reason of this peculiar intimate union and relation between the soul and body, there is in the whole nature a fixed aversion from a dissolution. The soul and body are naturally and necessarily unwilling to fall into a state of separation, wherein the one shall cease to be what it was, and the other knows not clearly how it shall subsist. The body clasps about the soul, and the soul receives strange impressions from its embraces; the entire nature, existing in the union of them both, being unalterably averse unto a dissolution.

Wherefore, unless we can overcome this inclination, we can never die comfortably or cheerfully. We would, indeed, rather choose to be “clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life,” that the clothing of glory might come on our whole nature, soul and body, without dissolution. But if this may not be, yet then do believers so conquer this inclination by faith and views of the glory of Christ, as to attain a desire of this dissolution. So the apostle testifies of himself, “I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better” than to abide here, Phil. 1: 23. Saith he, “Ten epitimian echoon”, – not an ordinary desire, not that which works in me now and then; but a constant, habitual inclination, working in vehement acts and desires. And what does he so desire? It is “*anulusai*”, – “to depart,” say we, out of this body, from this tabernacle, to leave it for a season. But it is such a departure as consists in the dissolution of the present state of his being, that it should not be what it is. But how is it possible that a man should attain such an inclination unto, such a readiness for, such a vehement desire of, a dissolution? It is from a view by faith of Christ and his glory, whence the soul is satisfied that to be with him is incomparably better than in its present state and condition.

He, therefore, that would die comfortably, must be able to say within himself and to himself, “Die, then, thou frail and sinful flesh: ‘dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.’ I yield thee up unto the righteous doom of the Holy One. Yet herein also I give thee into

the hand of the great Refiner, who will hide thee in thy grave, and by thy consumption purify thee from all thy corruption and disposition to evil. And otherwise this will not be. After a long sincere endeavour for the mortification of all sin, I find it will never be absolutely perfect, but by this reduction into the dust. Thou shalt no more be a residence for the least remnant of sin unto eternity, nor any clog unto my soul in its acting on God. Rest therefore in hope; for God, in his appointed season, when he shall have a desire unto the work of his hands, will call unto thee, and thou shalt answer him out of the dust. Then shall he, by an act of big almighty power, not only restore thee unto thy pristine glory, as at the first creation, when thou wast the pure workmanship of his hands, but enrich and adorn thee with inconceivable privileges and advantages. Be not, then, afraid; away with all reluctance. Go into the dust, – rest in hope; ‘for thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.’” That which will enable us hereunto, in an eminent manner, is that view and consideration of the glory of Christ which is the object of the ensuing Meditation. For He who is now possessed of all that glory underwent this dissolution of nature as truly and really as ever we shall do.

Thirdly, There is required hereunto a readiness to comply with the times and seasons wherein God would have us depart and leave this world. Many think they shall be willing to die when their time is come; but they have many reasons, as they suppose, to desire that it may not yet be, – which, for the most part, arise merely from fear and aversion of death. Some desire to live that they may see more of that glorious world of God for his church, which they believe he will accomplish. So Moses prayed that he might not die in the wilderness, but go over Jordan, and see the good land, and that goodly mountain and Lebanon, the seat of the church, and of the worship of God; which yet God thought meet to deny unto him. And this denial of the request of Moses, made on the highest consideration possible, is instructive unto all in the like case. Others may judge themselves to have some work to do in the world, wherein they suppose that the glory of God and the good of the church are concerned; and therefore would be spared for a season. Paul knew not clearly whether it were not best for him to abide a while longer in the flesh on this account; and David often deprecates the present season of death because of the work which he had to do for God in the world. Others rise no higher

than their own private interests or concerns with respect unto their persons, their families, their relations, and goods in this world. They would see these things in a better or more settled condition before they die, and then they shall be most willing so to do. But it is the love of life that lies at the bottom of all these desires in men; which of itself will never forsake them. But no man can die cheerfully or comfortably who lives not in a constant resignation of the time and season of his death unto the will of God, as well as himself with respect unto death itself. Our times are in his hand, at his sovereign disposal; and his will in all things must be complied withal. Without this resolution, without this resignation, no man can enjoy the least solid peace in this world.

Fourthly, As the times and seasons, so the ways and means of the approaches of death have especial trials; which, unless we are prepared for them, will keep us under bondage, with the fear of death itself. Long, wasting, wearing consumption, burning fevers, strong pains of the stone, or the lice from within; or sword, fire, tortures, with shame and reproach from without, may be in the way of the access of death unto us. Some who have been wholly freed from all fears of death, as a dissolution of nature, who have looked on it as amiable and desirable in itself, have yet had great exercise in their minds about these ways of its approach: they have earnestly desired that this peculiar bitterness of the cup might be taken away. To get above all perplexities on the account of these things, is part of our wisdom in dying daily. And we are to have always in a readiness those graces and duties which are necessary thereunto. Such are a constant resignation of ourselves, in all events, unto the sovereign will, pleasure, and disposal of God. "May he not do what he will with his own?" Is it not right and meet it should be so? Is not his will in all things infinitely holy, wise, just, and good? Does he not know what is best for us, and what conduces most unto his own glory? Does not he alone do so? So is it to live in the exercise of faith, that if God calls us unto any of those things which are peculiarly dreadful unto our natures, he will give us such supplies of spirited strength and patience as shall enable us to undergo them, if not with ease and joy, yet with peace and quietness beyond our expectation. Multitudes have had experience that those things which, at a distance, have had an aspect of overwhelming dread, have been far from unsupportable in their

approach, when strength has been received from above to encounter with them. And, moreover, it is in this case required that we be frequent and steady in comparing these things with those which are eternal both as unto the misery which we are freed from and that blessedness which is prepared for us. But I shall proceed no farther with these particulars.

There is none of all the things we have insisted on – neither the resignation of a departing soul into the hand of God, nor a willingness to lay down this flesh in the dust, nor a readiness to comply with the will of God, as to the times and seasons, or the way and manner of the approach of death – that can be attained unto, without a prospect of that glory that shall give us a new state far more excellent than what we here leave or depart from. This we cannot have, whatever we pretend, unless we have some present views of the glory of Christ. An apprehension of the future manifestation of it in heaven will not relieve us, if here we know not what it is, and wherein it does consist, – if we have not some previous discovery of it in this life. This is that which will make all things easy and pleasant unto us, even death itself, as it is a means to bring us unto its full enjoyment.

Other great and glorious advantages, which may be obtained in the diligent discharge of the duty here proposed, might be insisted on, but that the things themselves discoursed of will evidently discover and direct us unto the spring and reasons of them; besides, weakness, weariness, and the near approaches of death do call me off from any farther labour in this kind.

Meditations and Discourses on The Glory of Christ

PART I · CHAPTER 1

The Explication of the Text

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world
- John 17:24

The high priest under the law, when he was to enter into the holy place on the solemn day of atonement, was to take both his hands full of sweet incense from the golden table of incense, to carry along with him in his entrance. He had also a censer filled with fire, that was taken from the altar of burnt-offerings, where atonement was made for sin with blood. Upon his actual entrance through the veil, he put the incense on the fire in the censer until the cloud of its smoke covered the ark, and the mercy seat. See Lev. 16: 12,13. And the end hereof was to present unto God, in the behalf of the people, a sweet-smelling savour from the sacrifice of propitiation. See the declaration of these things in our exposition of Heb. 9.

In answer unto this mystical type, the great High Priest of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ, being to enter into the “holy place not made with hands,” did, by the glorious prayer recorded in this chapter, influenced from the blood of his sacrifice, fill the heavens above, the glorious place of God’s residence, with a cloud of incense, or the sweet perfume of his blessed intercession, typed by the incense offered by the high priest of old. By the same eternal fire wherewith he offered himself a bloody sacrifice to make atonement for sin, he kindled in his most holy soul those desires for the application of all its benefits unto his church which are here expressed, and wherein his intercession does consist.

It is only one passage in the verse above named that at present I design an inquiry into. And this is the subject-matter of what the Lord Christ here desires in the behalf of those given him by the Father, – namely, **THAT THEY MAY BEHOLD HIS GLORY.**

It is evident that in this prayer the Lord Christ has respect unto his own glory and the manifestation of it, which he had in the entrance asked of the Father, verses 4, 5. But in this place he has not so much respect unto it as his own, as unto the advantage, benefit, satisfaction, and blessedness of his disciples, in the beholding of it. For these things were the end of all that mediatory glory which was given unto him. So Joseph charged his brethren, when he had revealed himself unto them, that they should tell his father of all his “*glory in Egypt*,” Gen. 45: 13. This he did, not for an ostentation of his own glory, but for the satisfaction which he knew his father would take in the knowledge of it. And such a manifestation of his glory unto his disciples does the Lord Christ here desire, as might fill them with blessed satisfaction for evermore.

This alone, which is here prayed for, will give them such satisfaction, and nothing else. The hearts of believers are like the needle touched by the loadstone, which cannot rest until it comes to the point whereunto, by the secret virtue of it, it is directed. For being once touched by the love of Christ, receiving therein an impression of secret ineffable virtue, they will ever be in motion, and restless, until they come unto him, and behold his glory. That soul which can be satisfied without it, – that cannot be eternally satisfied with it, – is not partaker of the efficacy of his intercession.

I shall lay the foundation of the ensuing Meditations in this one assertion, – namely, *That one of the greatest privileges and advancements of believers, both in this world and unto eternity, consists in their BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF CHRIST.* This, therefore, He desires for them in this solemn intercession, as the complement of all his other requests in their behalf; – “That they may behold my glory,” – “Hina teooroosi”, – that they may see, view, behold, or contemplate on my glory. The reasons why I assign not this glorious privilege only unto the heavenly state, which is principally respected in this place, but apply it unto the state of believers in this world also, with their duties and privileges therein, shall be immediately declared.

All unbelievers do in their heart call Christ “Ichabod,” – “Where is the glory?” They see neither “*form nor comeliness in him*,” that he should be desired. They look on him as Michal, Saul’s daughter, did on David “*dancing before the ark*,” when she despised him in her

heart. They do not, indeed (many of them), “call Jesus anathema,” but cry, “*Hail, Master!*” and then crucify him.(Matt. 26:49)

Hence have we so many cursed opinions advanced in derogation unto his glory, – some of them really destructive of all that is truly so; yea, denying the “*only Lord that bought us,*” and substituting a false Christ in his room. And others there are who express their slight thoughts of him and his glory by bold, irreverent inquiries, of what use his Person is in our religion; as though there were anything in our religion that has either reality, substance, or truth, but by virtue of its relation thereunto. And, by their answers, they bring their own inquiries yet nearer unto the borders of blasphemy.

Never was there an age since the name of Christians was known upon the earth, wherein there was such a direct opposition made unto the Person and glory of Christ, as there is in that wherein we live. There were, indeed, in the first times of the church, sums of proud, doting, brain-sick persons, who vented many foolish imaginations about him, which issued at length in Arianism, in whose ruins they were buried. The gates of hell in them prevailed not against the rock on which the church is built. But as it was said of Caesar, “*Solus accedit sobrius, ad perdendam rempublicam*”, – “He alone went soberly about the destruction of the commonwealth;” so we now have great numbers who oppose the Person and glory of Christ, under a pretence of sobriety of reason, as they vainly plead. Yea, the disbelief of the mysteries of the Trinity, and the incarnation of the Son of God, – the sole foundation of Christian religion, – is so diffused in the world, as that it has almost devoured the power and vitals of it. And not a few, who dare not yet express their minds, do give broad intimations of their intentions and good-will towards him, in making them the object of their scorn and reproach who desire to know nothing but him, and him crucified.

God, in his appointed time, will effectually vindicate his honour and glory from the vain attempts of men of corrupt minds against them.

In the meantime, it is the duty of all those who “*love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,*” to give testimony in a peculiar manner unto his divine Person and glory, according unto their several capacities, because of the opposition that is made against them.

I have thought myself on many accounts obliged to cast my mite into this treasury. and I have chosen so to do, not in a way of controversy (which formerly I have engaged in), but so as, together with the vindication of the truth, to promote the strengthening of the faith of true believers, their edification in the knowledge of it; and to express the experience which they have, or may have, of the power and reality of these things. That which at present I design to demonstrate is, that the beholding of the glory of Christ is one of the greatest privileges and advancements that believers are capable of in this world, or that which is to come. It is that whereby they are first gradually conformed unto it, and then fixed in the eternal enjoyment of it. For here in this life, beholding his glory, they are changed or transformed into the likeness of it, 2 Cor. 3: 18; and hereafter they shall be *“for ever like unto him,”* because they *“shall see him as he is,”* 1 John 3: 1, 2. Hereon do our present comforts and future blessedness depend. This is the life and reward of our souls. *“He that has seen him has seen the Father also,”* John 14: 9. For we discern the *“light of the knowledge of the glory of God only in the face of Jesus Christ,”* 2 Cor. 4: 6.

There are, therefore, two ways or degrees of beholding the glory of Christ, which are constantly distinguished in the Scripture. The one is by faith, in this world, – which is *“the evidence of things not seen;”* the other is by sight, or immediate vision in eternity, 2 Cor. 5: 7, *“We walk by faith, and not by sight.”* We do so while we are in this world, *“while we are present in the body, and absent from the Lord,”* verse 8. But we shall live and walk by sight hereafter. And it is the Lord Christ and his glory which are the immediate object both of this faith and sight. For we here *“behold him darkly in a glass”* (that is by faith); *“but we shall see him face to face”* (by immediate vision). *“Now we know him in part, but then we shall know him as we are known,”* 1 Cor. 13: 12. What is the difference between these two ways of beholding the glory of Christ shall be afterward declared.

It is the second way – namely, by vision in the light of glory – that is principally included in that prayer of our blessed Saviour, that his disciples may be where he is, to behold his glory. But I shall not confine my inquiry thereunto; nor does our Lord Jesus exclude from his desire that sight of his glory which we have by faith in this world, but prays for the perfection of it in heaven. It is therefore the first way

that, in the first place, I shall insist upon; and that for the reasons ensuing: –

1. *No man shall ever behold the glory of Christ by sight hereafter, who does not in some measure behold it by faith here in this world.* Grace is a necessary preparation for glory, and faith for sight. Where the subject (the soul) is not previously seasoned with grace and faith, it is not capable of glory or vision. Nay, persons not disposed hereby unto it cannot desire it, whatever they pretend; they only deceive their own souls in supposing that so they do. Most men will say with confidence, living and dying, that they desire to be with Christ, and to behold his glory; but they can give no reason why they should desire any such thing, – only they think it somewhat that is better than to be in that evil condition which otherwise they must be cast into for ever, when they can be here no more. If a man pretend himself to be enamoured on, or greatly to desire, what he never saw, nor was ever represented unto him, he does but dote on his own imaginations. And the pretended desires of many to behold the glory of Christ in heaven, who have no view of it by faith while they are here in this world, are nothing but self-deceiving imaginations.

So do the Papists delude themselves. Their carnal affections are excited by their outward senses to delight in images of Christ, – in his sufferings, his resurrection, and glory above. Hereon they satisfy themselves that they behold the glory of Christ himself and that with love and great delight. But whereas there is not the least true representation made of the Lord Christ or his glory in these things, – that being confined absolutely unto the gospel alone, and this way of attempting it being laid under a severe interdict, – they do but sport themselves with their own deceivings.

The apostle tells us concerning himself and other believers, when the Lord Christ was present and conversed with them in the days of his flesh, that they “*saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,*” John 1: 14. And we may inquire, what was this glory of Christ which they so saw, and by what means they obtained a prospect of it.

a). For it was not the glory of his outward condition, as we behold the glory and grandeur of the kings and potentates of the earth; for he made himself of no reputation, but being in the form of a servant, he walked in the condition of a man of low degree. The secular grandeur

of his pretended Vicar makes no representation of that glory of his which his disciples saw. He kept no court, nor house of entertainment, nor (though he made all things) had of his own where to lay his head.

b) Nor was it with respect to the outward form of the flesh which he was made, wherein he took our nature on him, as we see the glory of a comely or beautiful person; – for he had therein neither form nor comeliness that he should be desired, *“his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,”* Isa. 52: 14; 53: 2, 3. All things appeared in him as became *“a man of sorrows.”*

c) Nor was it absolutely the eternal essential glory of his divine nature that is intended; for this no man can see in this world. What we shall attain in a view thereof hereafter we know not.

d) But it was his glory, as he was *“full of grace and truth.”* They saw the glory of his person and his office in the administration of grace and truth. And how or by what means did they see this glory of Christ? It was by faith, and no otherwise; for this privilege was granted unto them only who *“received him,”* and believed on his name, John 1: 12. This was that glory which the Baptist saw, when, upon his coming unto him he said unto all that were present *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”* verses 29-33.

Wherefore let no man deceive himself; he that has no sight of the glory of Christ here, shall never have any of it hereafter unto his advantage. It is not, therefore, unto edification to discourse of beholding the glory of Christ in heaven by vision, until we go through a trial whether we see anything of it in this world by faith or no.

2. *The beholding of Christ in glory is that which in itself is too high, illustrious, and marvellous for us in our present condition.* It has a splendour and glory too great for our present spiritual visible faculty; as the direct, immediate sight of the sun darkens our sight, and does not relieve or strengthen it at all. Wherefore we have no way to take into our minds any true spiritual apprehensions of the nature of immediate vision, or what it is to see the glory of Christ in heaven, but by that view which we have by faith in this life of the same glory. Whatever otherwise falls into our minds is but conjecture and imagination; such as are the contemplations of most about heavenly things.

I have seen and read somewhat of the writings of learned men concerning the state of future glory; some of them are filled with excellent notions of truth, and elegance of speech, whereby they cannot but much affect the minds of them who duly consider what they say. But I know not well whence it comes to pass, many complain that, in reading of such discourses, they are like a man who *“beholds his natural face in a glass, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was;”* as one of old complained to the same purpose upon his perusal of Plato’s contemplations about the immortality of the soul. The things spoken do not abide nor incorporate with our minds. They please and refresh for a little while, like a shower of rain in a dry season, that soaks not unto the roots of things; the power of them does not enter into us.

Is it not all from hence, that their notions of future things are not educed out of the experience which we have of the beginnings of them in this world? Without which they can make no permanent abode in our minds, nor continue any influence upon our affections. Yea, the soul is disturbed, not edified, in all contemplations of future glory, when things are proposed unto it whereof in this life it has neither foretaste, sense, experience, nor evidence. No man ought to look for anything in heaven, but what one way or other he has some experience of in this life. If men were fully persuaded hereof, they would be, it may be, more in the exercise of faith and love about heavenly things than for the most part they are. At present they know not what they enjoy, and they look for they know not what.

Hence is it that men, utterly strangers unto all experience of the beginning of glory in themselves as an effect of faith, have filled their divine worship with images, pictures, and music, to represent unto themselves somewhat of that glory which they fancy to be above. For into that which is truly so, they have no prospect, or can have; because they have no experience of its power in themselves, nor do they taste of its goodness by any of its first-fruits in their own minds. Wherefore by that view alone, and not otherwise, which we have of the glory of Christ by faith here in this world, we may attain such blessed conceptions of our beholding his glory above by immediate vision, as shall draw out our hearts unto the admiration of it and desires of its full enjoyment.

3. *Herein, then, our present edification is principally concerned; for in this present beholding of the glory of Christ, the life and power of faith are most eminently acted.* And from this exercise of faith does love unto Christ principally, if not solely, arise and spring. If, therefore, we desire to have faith in its vigour or love in its power, giving rest, complacency, and satisfaction unto our own souls, we are to seek for them in the diligent discharge of this duty; – elsewhere they will not be found. Herein would I live; – herein would I die; – hereon would I dwell in my thoughts and affections, to the withering and consumption of all the painted beauties of this world, unto the crucifying all things here below, until they become unto me a dead and deformed thing, no way meet for affectionate embraces.

For these and the like reasons I shall first inquire into our beholding of the glory of Christ in this world by faith; and therein endeavour to lead the souls of them that believe into the more retired walks of faith, love, and holy meditation, “*whereby the King is held in the galleries,*” Song of Solomon 7: 5.

But because there is no benefit in, nor advantage by, the contemplation of this sacred truth, but what consists in an improvement of the practice of the duty declared in it, – namely, the constant beholding of the glory of Christ by faith, – I shalt for the promotion of it, premise some few advantages which we may have thereby.

1. *We shall hereby be made fit and meet for heaven.* Every man is not so who desires it, and hopes for it; for some are not only unworthy of it, and excluded from it, by reason of sin, but they are unmet for it, and incapable of any advantage by it. All men, indeed, think themselves fit enough for glory (what should hinder them?) if they could attain it; but it is because they know not what it is. Men shall not be clothed with glory, as it were, whether they will or no. It is to be received in that exercise of the faculties of their souls which such persons have no ability for. Music has no pleasure in it unto them that cannot hear; nor the most beautiful colours, unto them that cannot see. It would be no benefit unto a fish, to take him from the bottom of the ocean, filled with cold and darkness, and to place him under the beams of the sun; for he is no way meet to receive any refreshment thereby. Heaven itself would not be more advantageous unto persons not renewed by the Spirit of grace in this life.

Hence the apostle gives *“thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,”* Col 1: 12. Indeed, the beginning here, and the fulness of glory hereafter, are communicated unto believers, by an almighty act of the will and grace of God. But yet he has ordained ways, and means, whereby they may be made meet receptive subjects of the glory so to be communicated unto them. That this way and means is by the beholding of the glory of Christ by faith shall be fully declared in our progress. This, therefore, should excite us unto this duty; for all our present glory consists, in our preparation for future glory.

2. *No man can by faith take a real view of this glory, but virtue will proceed from it in a transforming power to change him “into the same image,”* 2 Cor. 3: 18. How this is done, and how we become like unto artist by beholding his glory, shall be fully declared in our progress

3. *The constant contemplation of the glory of Christ will give rest, satisfaction, and complacency unto the souls of them who are exercised therein.* Our minds are apt to be filled with a multitude of perplexed thoughts; – fears, cares, dangers, distresses, passions, and lusts, do make various impressions on the minds of men, filling them with disorder, darkness, and confusion. But where the soul is fixed in its thoughts and contemplations on this glorious object, it will be brought into and kept in a holy, serene, spiritual frame. For *“to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.”* And this it does by taking off our hearts from all undue regard unto all things below, in comparison of the great worth, beauty, and glory of what we are conversant withal. See Phil. 3: 7-11. A defect herein makes many of us strangers unto a heavenly life, and to live beneath the spiritual refreshments and satisfactions that the gospel does tender unto us.

4. *The sight of the glory of Christ is the spring and cause of our everlasting blessedness. “We shall ever be with the Lord,”* 1 Thess. 4: 17, or *“be with Christ, which is best of all,* Phil. 1: 23. For there shall we *“behold his glory,”* John 17: 24; and by *“seeing him as he is, we shall be made like him,”* 1 John 3: 2; – which is our everlasting blessedness.

The enjoyment of God by sight is commonly called the BEATIFICIAL VISION; and it is the sole fountain of all the actings of our souls in the state of blessedness: which the old philosophers knew

nothing of; neither do we know distinctly what they are, or what is this sight of God. Howbeit, this we know, that God in his immense essence is invisible unto our corporeal eyes, and will be so to eternity; as also incomprehensible unto our minds. For nothing can perfectly comprehend that which is infinite, but what is itself infinite. Wherefore the blessed and blessing sight which we shall have of God will be always “*in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Therein will that manifestation of the glory of God, in his infinite perfections, and all their blessed operations, so shine into our souls, as shall immediately fill us with peace, rest, and glory.

These things we here admire, but cannot comprehend. We know not well what we say when we speak of them: yet is there in true believers a foresight and foretaste of this glorious condition. There enters sometimes, by the Word and Spirit, into their hearts such a sense of the untreated glory of God, shining forth in Christ, as affects and satiates their souls with ineffable joy. Hence ariseth that “*peace of God which passeth all understanding,*” keeping “*our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ,*” Phil. 4: 7. “*Christ,*” in believers, “*The hope of glory,*” gives them to taste of the first fruits of it; yea, sometimes to bathe their souls in the fountain of life, and to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand. Where any are utterly unacquainted with these things, they are carnal, yes, blind, and see nothing afar off. These enjoyments, indeed, are rare, and for the most part of short continuance. “*Rara hora, brevis mora.*” But it is from our own sloth and darkness that we do not enjoy more visits of this grace, and that the dawnings of glory do not more shine on our souls. Such things as these may excite us to diligence in the duty proposed unto us.

And I shall inquire, – 1. What is that glory of Christ which we do or may behold by faith? 2. How do we behold it? 3. Wherein our doing so differs from immediate vision in heaven? And in the whole we shall endeavour an answer unto the inquiry made unto the spouse, by the daughters of Jerusalem, Song of Solomon 5: 9, “*What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*”

PART I · CHAPTER 2

The Glory of the Person of Christ, as the only Representative of God unto the Church

The glory of Christ is the glory of the person of Christ. So he calls it “Ten doxan ten emen”, John 17: 24, “That glory which is mine,” which belongeth to me, unto my person.

The person of Christ may be considered two ways: – **1.** *Absolutely* in itself. **2.** In the *assumption* and discharge of his office, with what ensued thereon. His glory on these distinct accounts is distinct and different; but all equally his own. How in both respects we may behold it by faith, is that which we inquire into.

The first thing wherein we may behold the glory of the person of Christ, God and man, which was given him of his Father, consists in the representation of the nature of God, and of the divine person of the Father, unto the church in him; for we behold “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*,” 2 Cor. 4: 6. Otherwise we know it not, we see it not, we see nothing of it; that is the way of seeing and knowing God, declared in the Scripture as our duty and blessedness.

The glory of God comprehends both the holy properties of his nature and the counsels of his will; and “*the light of the knowledge*” of these things we have only “*in the face*” or person “*of Jesus Christ*.” Whatever obscure, imperfect notions we may have of them other ways, we cannot have “*foetismon tes gnoseos tes doxes tou Theou*”, “the light of the” illuminating, irradiating “*knowledge of the glory of God*,” which may enlighten our minds and sanctify your hearts, but only “*en prosopoi*”, “*in the face*” or person “*of Jesus Christ*,” for he is “*the image of God*,” 2 Cor. 4: 4; “*the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person*,” Heb. 1: 3; “*the image of the invisible God*,” Col. 1: 15. I do here only mention these things because I have handled them at large in my discourse of the Mystery

of Godliness, or the Person of Christ; whereunto I refer the readers for their full declaration and vindication. Herein is he glorious, in that he is the great representative of the nature of God and his will unto us; which without him would have been eternally hid from us, or been invisible unto us, – we should never have seen God at any time, here nor hereafter, John 1: 18.

In his divine person absolutely considered, he is the essential image of God, even the Father. He is in the Father, and the Father in him, in the unity of the same divine essence, John 14: 10. Now he is with the Father, John 1: 1, in the distinction of his person, so is he his essential image, Col. 1: 15; Heb. 1: 3. In his incarnation he becomes the representative image of God unto the church, 2 Cor. 4: 6; without whom our understandings can make no such approach unto the divine excellencies but that God continues to be unto us what he is in himself, – the “*visible God*.” In the face of Jesus Christ we see his glory.

This is the original glory of Christ, given him by his Father, and which by faith we may behold. He, and he alone, declares, represents, and makes known, unto angels and men, the essential glory of the invisible God, his attributes and his will; without which, a perpetual comparative darkness would have been the whole creation, especially that part of it here below.

This is the foundation of our religion, the Rock whereon the church is built, the ground of all our hopes of salvation, of life and immortality: all is resolved into this, – namely, the representation that is made of the nature and will of God in the person and office of Christ. If this fail us, we are lost for ever; if this Rock stand firm, the church is safe here, and shall be triumphant hereafter.

Herein, then, is the Lord Christ exceedingly glorious. Those who cannot behold this glory of his by faith, – namely, as he is the great divine ordinance to represent God unto us, – they know him not. In their worship of him, they worship but an image of their own devising.

Yea, in the ignorance and neglect hereof consists the formal nature of unbelief, even that which is inevitably ruinous unto the souls of men. He that discerns not the representation of the glory of God in the person of Christ unto the souls of men, is an unbeliever. Such was the state of the unbelieving Jews and gentiles of old; they

did not, they would not, they could not, behold the glory of God in him, nor how he did represent him. That this was both the cause and the formal nature of their unbelief, the apostle declares at large, 1 Cor. 1: 21-25. Not to see the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and consequently all the other holy properties of his nature, in Christ, is to be an unbeliever.

The essence of faith consists in a due ascription of glory to God, Rom. 4: 20. This we cannot attain unto without the manifestation of those divine excellencies unto us wherein he is glorious. This is done in Christ alone, so as that we may glorify God in a saving and acceptable manner. He who discerns not the glory of divine wisdom, power, goodness, love, and grace, in the person and office of Christ, with the way of the salvation of sinners by him, is an unbeliever.

Hence the great design of the devil, in the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, was to blind the eyes of men, and fill their minds with prejudices, that they might not behold this glory of his; so the apostle gives an account of his success in this design, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4, *“If our gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”* By various ways and methods of deceit, to secure the reputation he had got of being “god of this world,” by pretences and appearances of supernatural power and wisdom, he laboured to blind the eyes of men with prejudices against that glorious light of the gospel which proposed the Lord Christ as the only image of God.

This blindness, this darkness is cured in them that believe, by the mighty power of God; for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has irradiated our hearts with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, verse 6, – wherein true saving faith does consist. Under this darkness perished the unbelieving world of Jews and Gentiles: and such is the present condition of all by whom the divine person of Christ is denied; for no mere creature can ever make a perfect representation of God unto us. But we must a little farther inquire into this mystery.

I. Since men fell from God by sin, it is no small part of their misery and punishment, that they are covered with thick darkness and ignorance of the nature of God. They know him not, they have

not seen him at any time. Hence is that promise to the church in Christ, Isa. 60: 2, “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”

The ancient philosophers made great inquiries into, and obtained many notions of, the Divine Being – its existence and excellencies. And these notions they adorned with great elegance of speech, to allure others unto the admiration of them. Hereon they boasted themselves to be the only wise men in the world, Rom. 1: 22, “*faskontes einai sofoi*”, – they boasted that they were the wise. But we must abide in the judgement of the apostle concerning them in their inquiries; he assures us that the world in its wisdom – that is, these wise men in it by their wisdom – knew not God, 1 Cor. 1: 21. And he calls the authors of their best notions, Atheists, or men “*without God in the world*,” Eph. 2: 12.

1) For they had no certain guide, rule, nor light, which, being attended unto, might lead them infallibly into the knowledge of the divine nature. All they had of this kind was their own “*logismoi*”, their reasonings or imaginations; whereby they commenced “*sodzetetai tou aionos toutou*”, “the great disputes of the world;” but in them they “*waxed vain, and their foolish heart was darkened*,” Rom. 1: 21. They did at best but endeavour “*pselafain*”, “to feel after God,” as men do in the dark after what they cannot clearly discern, Acts 17: 27. Among other, Cicero’s book, “*De Nature Decorum*,” gives us an exact account of the intention of the apostle in that expression. And it is at this day not want of wit, but hatred of the mysteries of our religion, which makes so many prone to forego all supernatural revelation, and to retake themselves unto a religion declared, as they suppose, by reason and the light of nature; – like bats and owls, who, being not able to bear the light of the sun, retake themselves unto the twilight, to the dawnings of light and darkness.

2) Whatever they did attain, as unto rational notions about things invisible and incomprehensible, yet could they never deliver themselves from such principles and practices in idolatry and all manner of flagitious sins, as that they could be of any benefit unto them. This is so effectually demonstrated by the apostle

in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, as that we need not to insist upon it.

Men may talk what they please of a light within them, or of the power of reason to conduct them unto that knowledge of God whereby they may live unto him; but if they had nothing else, if they did not boast themselves of that light which has its foundation and original in divine revelation alone, they would not excel them who, in the best management of their own seasonings, “*knew not God*,” but waxed vain in their imaginations

With respect unto this universal darkness, – that is, ignorance of God, with horrid confusion accompany it in the minds of men, – Christ is called, and is, the “*light of men*,” the “*light of the world*,” because in and by him alone this darkness is dispelled, as he is the “*Sun of Righteousness*”

II. This darkness in the minds of men, this ignorance of God, his nature and his will, was the original of all evil unto the world, and yet continues so to be.

1) **For hereon did Satan erect his kingdom and throne, obtaining in his design until he bare himself as “*the god of this world*,” and was so esteemed by the most.** He exalted himself by virtue of this darkness (as he is the “prince of darkness”) into the place and room of God, as the object of the religious worship of men. For the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed unto devils, and not to God, 1 Cor. 10: 20; Lev. 17: 7; Deut. 32: 17; Ps. 106: 37; Gal. 4: 8. This is the territory of Satan; yea, the power and sceptre of his kingdom in the minds of the “*children of disobedience*.” Hereby he maintains his dominion unto this day in many and great nations, and with individual persons innumerable.

2) **This is the spring of all wickedness and confusion among men themselves.** Hence arose that flood of abominations in the old world, which God took away with a flood of desolation: hence were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he revenged with “*fire from heaven*.” In brief; all the rage, blood, confusion, desolations, cruelties, oppressions, villainies, which the world has been and is filled withal, whereby the souls of men have been and are flooded into eternal destruction, have all arisen from this corrupt fountain of the ignorance of God.

3) Of such as those described we are the posterity and offspring. Our forefathers in this nation were given up unto as brutish a service of the devil as any nation under the sun. It is therefore an effect of infinite mercy, that the day has dawned on us, poor Gentiles, and that the *“day spring from on high has visited us”* See the glory of this grace expressed, Eph 3: 5-10. God might have left us to perish in the blindness and ignorance of our forefathers; but of his own accord, and by his own powerful grace alone, he has *“translated us out of darkness into his marvellous light.”* But, alas! the horrible ingratitude of men for the glorious light of the gospel, and the abuse of it, will issue in a sore revenge.

God was known under the Old Testament by the revelation of his Word, and the institution of his worship. This was the glory and privilege of Israel, as the Psalmist declares, Ps. 147: 19, 20, *“He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgements unto Israel. He has not dealt so with any nation.”* The church then knew him; yet so as that they had an apprehension that he dwelt in *“thick darkness,”* where they could not have any clear views of him, Exod. 21; Deut. 5: 22; 1 Kings 8: 12; 2 Chron. 6: 1. And the reason why God so represented himself in darkness unto them, was, to instruct them in their imperfect state, wherein they could not comprehend that glory which should afterward be revealed. For as he is now made known in Christ, we see that “he is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.”

4) Hitherto darkness in general covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, as unto the knowledge of God; only there was a twilight in the church. The day did not yet dawn, the *“shadows did not flee away,”* nor the *“day-star shine”* in the hearts of men. But when the *“Sun of Righteousness”* did arise in his strength and beauty, when the Son of God *“appeared in the flesh,”* and in the discharge of his office, – God himself, as unto his being, and manner of existence in three distinct persons, with all the glorious properties of the divine nature, was illustriously manifested unto them that did believe; and the light of the knowledge of them dispelled all the shadows that were in the church, and shone into the darkness which was in the world, so as that none continued ignorant of God but those who would not see. See John 1: 5, 14, 17, 18; 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4.

Herein is the Lord Christ glorious. And this is that which I shall now speak unto, – namely, how we may behold the glory of Christ in the representation and revelation that is made of God and his glory, in his person and office, unto all that do believe. For it is not so much the declaration of the nature of the things themselves, wherein the glory of Christ does consist, as our way and duty in the beholding of them, which at present is designed.

He calls unto us, saying, “*Behold me, – look unto me, – and be saved,*” Isa. 45: 22. What is it that we see in Christ? what do we behold in him? He asks that question concerning his church, “*What will ye see in the Shulamite?*” Whereto he answers, “*As it were the company of two armies*” Song of Solomon 6: 13; or the two churches of the Old and New Testament, in order and beauty. We may inquire, What shall we, what do we see in him? Do we see him as “the image of the invisible God,” representing him, his nature, properties, and will unto us? Do we see him as the “character,” the “*express image of the person of the Father,*” so that we have no need of Philips request, “*Lord show us the Father?*” because having seen him, we have seen the Father also, John 14: 9.

This is our first saving view of Christ, the first instance of our beholding his glory by faith. So to see him as to see God in him, is to behold his glory; for herein he is eternally glorious. And this is that glory whose view we ought to long for and labour after. And if we see it not, we are yet in darkness; yea, though we say we see, we are blind like others. So David longed and prayed for it, when yet he could behold it only in types and shadows, Ps. 63: 1, 2, “*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee; – to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*” For there was in the sanctuary an obscure representation of the glory of God in Christ. How much more should we prize that view of it which we may have with open face, though yet “*as in a glass!*” 2 Cor. 3: 18.

Moses, when he had seen the works of God, which were great and marvellous, yet found not himself satisfied therewith; wherefore, after all, he prays that God “*would show him his glory,*” Exod. 33: 18. He knew that the ultimate rest, blessedness, and satisfaction of the soul, is not in seeing the works of God, but the glory of God himself. Therefore did he desire some immediate dawns of it upon him in

this world: *“I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”* And if we have right apprehensions of the future state of blessedness, we cannot but have the same desire of seeing more of his glory in this life. But the question is, How we may attain it? If we are left unto ourselves in this inquiry, if we have no other way for it but the immediate rising of our thoughts on the immensity of the divine nature, we must come every one to the conclusion that Augur makes on the like consideration, *“Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? who has gathered the wind in his fists? who has bound the waters in a garment? who has established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?”* Prov. 30: 2-4.

It is in Christ alone that we may have a clear, distinct view of the glory of God and his excellencies. For him, and him alone, has he appointed the representative of himself unto us; and we shall take an account hereof in one or two especial instances. See John 1: 18, 14: 7-10; 2 Cor. 4: 6; Col. 1: 15; Eph. 3: 4-10; Heb. 1: 3.

1. Infinite wisdom is one of the most glorious properties of the divine nature. It is that which is directive of all the external works of God, wherein the glory of all the other excellencies of God is manifested: wherefore the manifestation of the whole glory of God proceeds originally from infinite wisdom. But, as Job speaks, *“Where shall [this] wisdom be found; and what is the place of understanding?”* chap. 28: 12. *“Can we by searching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto perfection?”* chap. 11: 7. As it is in itself an essential, eternal property of the divine nature, we can have no comprehension of it, – we can but adore it in that infinite distance wherein we stand from God; but in its operations and effects it may be discerned, for they are designed of God for its manifestation. Among these, the most excellent is the contrivance of the great work of the salvation of the church. So it is celebrated by the apostle, Eph 3: 9, 10, *“To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has 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.”*

If we have any interest in God, if we have any hopes of blessedness in beholding of his glory unto eternity, we cannot but desire a view (such as is attainable) of this infinite, manifold wisdom of God in this life. But it is in Christ alone that we can discern anything of it; for him has the Father chosen and sealed to represent it unto us. All the treasures of this wisdom are hid, laid up, and laid out in him; – herein lies the essence and form of faith. Believers by it do see the wisdom of God in Christ, in his person and office, – Christ the wisdom of God. Unbelievers see it not, as the apostle argues, 1 Cor. 1: 22-24.

In beholding the glory of this infinite wisdom of God in Christ, we behold his own glory also, – the glory given him of his Father; for this is his glory, that in and by him, and him alone, the wisdom of God is manifested and represented unto us. When God appointed him as the great and only means of this end, he gave him honour and glory above the whole creation; for it is but little of divine wisdom which the works of it declare, in comparison of what is manifested in Christ Jesus. We no way deny or extenuate the manifestation that is made of the wisdom of God in the works of creation and providence. It is sufficient to detect the folly of atheism and idolatry; and was designed of God unto that end. But its comparative insufficiency with respect unto the representation of it in Christ as to the ends of knowing God aright and living unto him – the Scripture does abundantly attest. And the abuse of it was catholic [i. e., universal], as the apostle declares, Rom. 1: 20, &c. To see this wisdom clearly is our wisdom; and a due apprehension of it fills the souls of believers *“with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”*

2. We may also instance in the love of God. The apostle tells us that *“God is love,”* 1 John 4: 8. Divine love is not to be considered only in its effects, but in its nature and essence; and be it is God himself, for *“God is love.”* And a blessed revelation this is of the divine nature; it casts out envy, hatred, malice, revenge, with all their fruits, in rage, fierceness, implacability, persecution, murder, into the territories of Satan. They belong not unto God in his nature or acting; for *“God is love.”* So the same apostle tells us, that he who *“slew his brother was of the wicked one,”* 1 John 3: 12. He was of the devil, his father, and his works did he do.

But the inquiry is as before, – How shall we have a view of this love, of God as love? by what way or means shall we behold the glory of it? It is hidden from all living, in God himself. The wise philosophers, who discoursed so much of the love of God, knew nothing of this, that “*God is love.*” The most of the natural notions of men about it are corrupt, and the best of them weak and imperfect. Generally, the thoughts of men about it are, that he is of a facile and easy nature, one that they may make bold withal in all their occasions; as the Psalmist declares, Ps. 50: 21. And whereas it must be learned in its effects, operations, and divine ways of its manifestation, those who know not Christ know nothing of them. And many things in providence do interpose to hinder our views of this love; – for although, indeed, “*God is love,*” yet “*his wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men;*” as all things at this day are filled with evidences of his anger and displeasure.

How, then, shall we know, wherein shall we behold, the glory of God in this, that he is love? The apostle declares it in the next words, 1 John 4: 9, “*In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*” This is the only evidence given us that “*God is love.*” Hereby alone is the divine nature as such made known unto us, – namely, in the mission, person, and office of the Son of God; without this, all is in darkness as unto the true nature and supreme operation of this divine love.

Herein do we behold the glory of Christ himself, even in this life. This glory was given him of the Father, – namely, that he now should declare and evidence that “*God is love;*” and he did so, “*that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*” Herein we may see how excellent, how beautiful, how glorious and desirable he is, seeing in him alone we have a due representation of God as he is love; which is the most joyful sight of God that any creature can obtain. He who beholds not the glory of Christ herein is utterly ignorant of those heavenly mysteries; – he knows neither God nor Christ, – he has neither the Father nor the Son. He knows not God, because he knows not the holy properties of his nature in the principal way designed by infinite wisdom for their manifestation; he knows not Christ, because he sees not the glory of God in him.

Wherefore, whatever notions men may have from the light of nature, or from the works of Providence, that there is love in God, – however they may adorn them in elegant, affecting expressions, – yet from them no man can know that “*God is love.*” In the revelation hereof Christ has the pre-eminence; nor can any man comprehend anything of it aright but in him. It is that which the whole light of the creation cannot discover; for it is the spring and centre of the mystery of godliness.

These things are of the deep things of God, such as belong unto that wisdom of God in a mystery which they that are carnal cannot receive, as the apostle testifies, 1 Cor. 2: 14. But the lowliest believer who lives in the exercise of faith, may have an understanding of them so far as is needful unto his love and obedience. The sum of the whole is this: If you would behold the glory of Christ as the great means of your sanctification and consolation, as the only preparation for the beholding of his glory in eternal blessedness, consider what of God is made known and represented unto you in him, wherein God purposed and designed to glorify himself in him. Now, this is all that may be known of God in a saving manner, especially his wisdom, his love, his goodness, grace, and mercy, whereon the life of our souls does depend; – and the Lord Christ being appointed the only way and means hereof, how exceeding glorious must he be in the eyes of them that do believe!

These things being premised, I shall close this first consideration of that glory of Christ which we behold by faith in this world, with some such observations as may excite us unto the practice of this great duty, and improvement of this great privilege, – the greatest which on this side heaven we can be made partakers of.

There are some who regard not these things at all, but rather despise them. They never entertain any serious thoughts of obtaining a view of the glory of God in Christ, – which is to be unbelievers. They look on him as a teacher that came forth from God to reveal his will, and to teach us his worship; and so indeed he was. But this they say was the sole use of his person in religion, – which is Mohammedanism. The manifestation of all the holy properties of the divine nature, with the representation of them unto angels above and the church in this world, as he is the image of the invisible God, in the constitution of his person and the discharge of his office, are things

they regard not; yea, they despise and scorn what is professed concerning them: for pride and contempt of others were always the safest covert of ignorance; otherwise it would seem strange that men should openly boast of their own blindness. But these conceptions of men's minds are influenced by that unbelief of his divine person which makes havoc of Christianity at this day in the world.

I speak of them whose minds are better disposed towards heavenly things; and unto them I say, Wherefore do you love Jesus Christ? for so you profess to do. Wherefore do you trust in him? wherefore do you honour him? wherefore do you desire to be in heaven with him? Can you give a reason of this hope that is in you, – an account why you do all or any of these things? If you cannot, all that you pretend towards him is but fancy and imagination; you fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. Or is one of your reasons hereof, that in him you do by faith behold that glory of God, with the holy properties of his nature, and their principal operations, in order unto your own salvation and blessedness, which otherwise would have been eternally hid from you? Herein is he “*precious unto them that do believe.*” 1 Pet. 2:7

Let us, therefore, as many as are spiritual, be thus minded. Let us make use of this privilege with rejoicing, and be found in the discharge of this duty with diligence. For thus to behold the glory of God is both our privilege and our duty. The duties of the Law were a burden and a yoke; but those of the gospel are privileges and advantages.

It is a promise concerning the days of the New Testament, that our “*eyes shall see the King in his beauty,*” Isa. 33: 17! We shall behold the glory of Christ in its lustre and excellency. What is this beauty of the King of saints? Is it not that God is in him, and he is the great representative of his glory unto us? Wherefore, in the contemplation of this glory consists the principal exercise of faith. And who can declare the glory of this privilege, that we who are born in darkness, and deserved to be cast out into utter darkness, should be translated into this marvellous “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?”

What are all the stained glories, the fading beauties of this world? of all that the devil showed our Saviour from the mount? what are they in comparison of one view of the glory of God represented in

Christ, and of the glory of Christ as his great representative? The most pernicious effect of unbelief under the preaching of the gospel is, that, together with an influence of power from Satan, *“it blinds the eyes of men ’s minds, that they should not see this glory of Christ;”* whereon they perish eternally, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4.

But the most of those who at this day are called Christians are strangers unto this duty. Our Lord Jesus Christ told the Pharisees, that notwithstanding all their boasting of the knowledge of God, they had not *“heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape;”* that is, as Moses did. They had no real acquaintance with him, – they had no spiritual view of his glory. And so it is amongst ourselves; notwithstanding the general profession that is of the knowledge of Christ, they are but few who thus behold his glory; and therefore few who are transformed into his image and likeness.

Some men speak much of the imitation of Christ, and following of his example; and it were well if we could see more of it really in effect. But no man shall ever become *“like unto him”* by bare imitation of his actions, without that view or intuition of his glory which alone is accompanied with a transforming power to change them into the same image.

The truth is, the best of us all are woefully defective in this duty, and many are discouraged from it because a pretence of it in some has degenerated into superstition; but we are loath at any time seriously to engage in it, and come with an unwilling kind of willingness unto the exercise of our minds in it.

Thoughts of this glory of Christ are too high for us, or too hard for us, such as we cannot long delight in; we turn away from them with a kind of weariness: yet are they of the same nature in general with our beholding of the glory of Christ in heaven, wherein there shall be no weariness, or satiety, unto eternity. Is not the cause of it, that we are unspiritual or carnal, having our thoughts and affections wonted to give entertainment unto other things? For this is the principal cause of our unreadiness and incapacity to exercise our minds in and about the great mysteries of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 3: 1-3.

And it is so with us, moreover, because we do not stir up ourselves with watchfulness and diligence in continual acting of faith on this blessed object. This is that which keeps many of us at so low an ebb, as unto the powers of a heavenly life and spiritual joys.

Did we abound in this duty, in this exercise of faith, our life in walking before God would be more sweet and pleasant unto us, – our spiritual light and strength would have a daily increase, – we should more represent the glory of Christ in our ways and walking than usually we do, and death itself would be most welcome unto us.

The angels themselves desire to look into the things of the glory of Christ, 1 Peter 1: 12. There is in them matter of inquiry and instruction for the most high and holy spirits in heaven. The manifold wisdom of God in them is made known unto “*principalities and powers in heavenly places by the church*,” Eph 3: 10. And shall we neglect that which is the object of angelical diligence to inquire into; especially considering that we are more than they concerned in it?

Is Christ, then, thus glorious in our eyes? Do we see the Father in him, or by seeing of him? Do we diligently daily contemplate on the wisdom, love, grace, goodness, holiness, and righteousness of God, as revealing and manifesting themselves in him? Do we sufficiently consider that the immediate vision of this glory in heaven will be our everlasting blessedness? Does the imperfect view which we have of it here increase our desires after the perfect sight of it above? With respect unto these inquiries I shall briefly speak unto sundry sorts of men.

Some will say they understand not these things, nor any concernment of their own in them. If they are true, yet are they notions which they may safely be without the knowledge of; for, so far as they can discern, they have no influence of Christian practice, or duties of morality; and the preaching of them does but take off the minds of men from more necessary duties. But “*if the gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that perish*”. And unto the objection I say:

1. Nothing is more fully and clearly revealed in the gospel, than that unto us Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God;” that he is the character of the person of the Father, so as that in seeing him we see the Father also; that we have “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in his face alone,” as has been proved. This is the principal fundamental mystery and truth of the Gospel; and which if it be not received, believed, owned, all other truths are useless unto our souls. To refer all the testimonies that are given hereunto to the doctrine which he taught, in contradistinction unto his person as

acting in the discharge of his office, is anti-evangelical, anti-Christian, – turning the whole Gospel into a fable.

2. *It is so, that the light of faith is given unto us principally to enable us to behold the glory of God in Christ,* – to contemplate on it, as unto all the ends of its manifestation. So is it expressly affirmed, 2 Cor. 4: 6. If we have not this light, as it is communicated by the power of God unto them that do believe, Eph 1: 17-19, we must be strangers unto the whole mystery of the gospel, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4.

3. *That in the beholding of the glory of God in Christ, we behold his glory also.* For herein is he infinitely glorious above the whole creation, in that in and by him alone the glory of the invisible God is represented unto us. Herein do our souls live. This is that whereby the image of God is renewed in us, and we are made like unto the first-born.

4. *This is so far from being unnecessary unto Christian practice, and the sanctified duties of morality,* that he knows not Christ, he knows not the Gospel, he knows not the faith of the catholic [universal] church, who imagines that they can be performed acceptably without it. Yea, this is the root whence all other Christian duties do spring, and whereon they grow, whereby they are distinguished from the works of heathens. He is no Christian who believes not that faith in the person of Christ is the spring of all evangelical obedience; or who knows not that faith respects the revelation of the glory of God in him.

If these things are so, as they are the most important truths of the Gospel, and whose denial overthrows the foundation of faith, and is ruinous to Christian religion, certainly it is our duty to live in the constant exercise of faith with respect unto this glory of Christ. And we have sufficient experience of what kind of morality the ignorance of it has produced.

Others there are who may be some way strangers, but are no way enemies, unto this mystery, and to the practical exercise of faith therein. To such I shall tender the ensuing directions:

1. *Reckon in your minds, that this beholding of the glory of Christ by beholding the glory of God, and all his holy properties in him, is the greatest privilege whereof in this life we can be made partakers.* The dawning of heaven is in it, and the first-fruits of glory; for this is life eternal, to know the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent,

John 17: 3. Unless you value it, unless you esteem it as such a privilege, you will not enjoy it; and that which is not valued according unto its worth is despised. It is not enough to think it a privilege, an advantage; but it is to be valued above other things, according unto its greatness and excellency. "*Destruction and Death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears,*" Job 28: 22. And if we do no more, we shall die strangers unto it; we are to "cry after this knowledge, and lift up our voice for this understanding," if we design to attain it.

2. As it is a great privilege, which requires a due valuation; so it is a great mystery, which requires much spiritual wisdom to the right understanding of it, and to direct in its practice, 1 Cor. 2: 4, 5. Flesh and blood will not reveal it unto us, but we must be taught of God to apprehend it, John 1: 12, 13; Matt. 16: 16, 17. Mere unsanctified reason will never enable us unto, nor guide us in, the discovery of this duty. Men are not so vain as to hope for skill and understanding in the mystery of a secular art or trade, without the diligent use of those means whereby it may be attained; and shall we suppose that we may be furnished with spiritual skill and wisdom in this sacred mystery, without diligence in the use of the means appointed of God for the attaining of it? The principal of them is fervent prayer.

Pray, then, with Moses, that God would show you this his glory; pray with the apostle, that "*the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened to behold it;*" pray that the "*God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.*" Fill your minds with spiritual thoughts and contrivances about them. Slothful and lazy souls never obtain one view of this glory; the "*lion in the way*" deters them from attempting it. Being carnal, they abhor all diligence in the use of spiritual means, such as prayer and meditation on things unto them uneasy, displeasing, and difficult. Unto others the way partakes of the nature of the end; the means of obtaining a view of the glory of Christ are of the same kind, of the same pleasantness, with that view itself in their proportion.

3. Learn the use hereof from the acting of contrary vicious habits. When the minds of men are vehemently fixed on the pursuit of their lusts, they will be continually ruminating on the objects of

them, and have a thousand contrivances about them, until their “*eyes become full of adulteries, and they cannot cease from sinning,*” as the apostle speaks. The objects of their lusts have framed and raised an image of themselves in their minds, and transformed them into their own likeness. Is this the way of them who “*go down to the chambers of death?*” Do they thus frame their souls, and make them meet for destruction, until their words, gestures, actions, proclaim the frame of their minds unto all that look upon them? And shall we be slothful and negligent in the contemplation of that glory which transforms our minds into its own likeness, so as that the eyes of our understandings shall be continually filled with it, until we see him and behold him continually, so as never to cease from the holy acts of delight in him and love to him?

4. *Would we, then, behold the glory of God as he manifests it in and by the holy properties of his nature, with their blessed operations and effects?* – without which we have nothing of the power of religion in us, whatever we pretend: this alone is the way of it. so to the whole creation, and all things contained in it; they can say no more, but, “*We have heard the fame and report of these things,*” and what we have heard we declare; but it is but a little portion of them that we are acquainted withal. “*The heavens,*” indeed, “*declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.*” “*The invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*” But, comparatively, it is but little that we can hence learn of these things, as to that we may behold of them in Christ Jesus. How blind herein was the best philosopher in comparison of the meanest of the apostles; yea, of him who is least in the kingdom of heaven!

But herein it is required that we rest not in the notion of this truth, and a bare assent unto the doctrine of it. The affecting power of it upon our hearts is that which we should aim at. Wherein does the blessedness of the saints above consist? Is it not herein, that they behold and see the glory of God in Christ? And what is the effect of it upon those blessed souls? Does it not change them into the same image, or make them like unto Christ? Does it not fill and satiate them with joy, rest, delight, complacency, and ineffable satisfaction? Do we expect, do we desire, the same state of blessedness? It is our present view of the glory of Christ which is our initiation thereinto, if

we are exercised in it, until we have an experience of its transforming power in our souls.

These things are, it may be, of little use unto some. Such as are babes in spiritual knowledge and understanding, – either because they are carnal, 1 Cor. 3: 1, 2, or slothful in hearing, Heb. 5: 12-14, – are not capable of these divine mysteries. And therefore the apostle did, in a special manner, declare this wisdom of God in a mystery unto them that were perfect, 1 Cor. 2: 6, 7; – that is, who were more grown in spiritual knowledge, and had their “*senses exercised to discern good and evil.*” It is unto them who are exercised in the contemplation of invisible things, who delight to walk in the more retired paths of faith and love, that they are precious.

Some few inferences from the whole of what has been declared shall put a close to this part of our Discourse.

1. The holy properties of the divine nature are not only represented unto our faith in Christ, as to their own essential glory, but as they are in the exercise of their powers for the salvation of the church. In him do we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy, and power of God, acting themselves in the contrivance, constitution, and efficacious accomplishment of the great work of our redemption and salvation. This gives, as unto us, an unutterable lustre unto the native amiableness of the divine excellencies. The wisdom and love of God are in themselves infinitely glorious, – infinitely amiable; – nothing can be added unto them, – there can be no increase of their essential glory.

Howbeit, as they are eternally resident in the divine nature, and absolutely the same with it, we cannot so comprehend them as to have an endearing, satiating view of their glory, but as they are exerted in the work of the redemption and salvation of the church, as they are expressed, communicating their blessed effects unto the souls of them that do believe, – which is done only in Christ; so the beams of their glory shine unto us with unspeakable refreshment and joy, 2 Cor. 4: 6. Hence the apostle, on the consideration of the acting of the holy properties of God in this blessed work, falls into that contemplation, “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counsellor? or who has 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,” Rom. 11: 33-36.

2. *In and through Christ we do believe in God*, 1 Pet. 1: 21. This is the life of our souls. God himself, in the infinite perfections of his divine nature, is the ultimate object of our faith. But he is not here the immediate object of it; but the divine way and means of the manifestation of himself and them unto us, are so. Through Christ we believe in God. By our belief in him we come to place our faith ultimately in God himself; and this we can no otherwise do but by beholding the glory of God in him, as has been declared.

3. *This is the only way whereby we may attain the saving, sanctifying knowledge of God*. Without this, every beam of divine light that shines on us, or gleams from without (*as the light shineth into darkness when the darkness comprehendeth it not*, John 1: 5), every spark that arises from the remainders of the light of nature within, does rather amaze the minds of men than lead them into the saving knowledge of God. So a glance of light in a dark night, giving a transient view of various objects, and passing away, does rather amaze than direct a traveller, and leave him more exposed unto wandering than before. Such were all those notions of the Divine Being and his excellencies, which those who boasted themselves to be wise among the heathen embraced and improved. They did but fluctuate in their minds; they did not transform them into the image and likeness of God, as the saving knowledge of him does, Col. 3: 10.

So the apostle expresses this truth, “*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God,*” 1 Cor. 1: 20-24.

After it was evident unto all, that the world, the wise, the studious, the contemplative part of it, in the wisdom of God, disposing them into that condition wherein they were left unto

themselves, in their own wisdom, their natural light and reason, did not, could not, come to the saving knowledge of God, but were puffed up into a contempt of the only way of the revelation of himself as weakness and folly; – it pleased God then to manifest all their wisdom to be folly, and to establish the only means of the knowledge of himself in Christ Jesus.

PART I · CHAPTER 3

The Glory of Christ in the mysterious Constitution of his Person

The second thing wherein we may behold the glory of Christ, given him of his Father, is in the mysterious constitution of his Person, as he is God and man in one and the same person. There are in him, in his one single individual person, two distinct natures; the one, eternal, infinite, immense, almighty, – the form and essence of God; the other, having a beginning in time, finite, limited, confined unto a certain place, – which is our nature, which he took on him when he was “*made flesh, and dwelt among us.*” The declaration of the nature of this glory is a part of my discourse of the Person of Christ, whereunto I refer the reader: – my present design is of another nature.

This is that glory whose beams are so illustrious, as that the blind world cannot bear the light and beauty of them. Multitudes begin openly to deny this incarnation of the Son of God, – this personal union of God and man in their distinct natures. They deny that there is either glory or truth in it; and it will ere long appear (it begins already to evidence itself) what greater multitudes there are, who yet do not, who yet dare not, openly reject the doctrine of it, who in truth believe it not, nor see any glory in it. Howbeit, this glory is the glory of our religion, – the glory of the church, – the sole Rock whereon it is built, – the only spring of present grace and future glory.

This is that glory which the angels themselves desire to behold, the mystery whereof they “*bow down to look into,*” 1 Peter 1: 12. So was their desire represented by the cherubim in the most holy place of the tabernacle; for they were a shadow of the minister of angels in the church. The ark and the mercy seat were a type of Christ in the discharge of his office; and these cherubim were made standing over them, as being in heaven above; but earnestly looking down upon them in a posture of reverence and adoration. So they did of old; and

in their present contemplation of it consists no small part of their eternal blessedness.

Hereon depends the ruin of Satan and his kingdom. His sin, so far as we can conceive, consisted of two parts.

1. His pride against the person of the Son of God, by whom he was created. *“For by him were all things created that are”* (or were when first created) *“in heaven, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or power,”* Col. 1: 16. against him he lifted up himself; – which was the beginning of his transgression.

2. Envy against mankind, made in the image of God, of the Son of God the first born. This completed his sin; nothing was now left whereon to act his pride and malice. Hereby his destruction is attended with everlasting shame in the discovery of his folly, wherein he would have contended with infinite wisdom, as well as misery, by the powers of the two natures united in one person.

Here lies the foundation of the church. The foundation of the whole old creation was laid in an act of absolute sovereign power. Hereby God *“hanged the earth upon nothing.”* But the foundation of the church is on this mysterious, immovable rock, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;”* – on the most intimate conjunction of the two natures, the divine and human, in themselves infinitely distant, in the same person.

We may name one place wherein it is gloriously represented unto us, Isa. 9: 6, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* Here must the whole church fall down and worship the Author of this wonderful contrivance; and, captivating their understandings unto the obedience of faith, humbly adore what they cannot comprehend.

This was obscurely represented unto the church of old, Exod. 3: 2- 6, *“And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes*

from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham," &c.

This fire was a type or declaration of the presence of God in the person of the Son. For with respect unto the Father he is called an Angel, the Angel of the covenant; but absolutely in himself, he was Jehovah, the "God of Abraham," &c. And of his presence the fire was a proper representation. For in his nature he is as a "*consuming fire*;" and his present work was the delivery of the church out of a fiery trial. This fire placed itself in a bush, where it burned; but the bush was not consumed. And although the continuance of the fire in the bush was but for a short season, a present appearance, yet thence was God said to dwell in the bush: "*The good-will of him that dwelt in the bush*," Deut. 33: 16. And this is so spoken, because the being of the fire in the bush for a season was a type of him in whom "*the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*," and that for ever, Col. 2: 9, – of him who was "*made flesh, and dwelt among us*," John 1: 14. The eternal fire of the divine nature dwells in the bush of our frail nature, yet is it not consumed thereby. God thus dwells in this bush, with all his good-will towards sinners.

Moses looked on this sight as a marvellous and wondrous thing. And if it were so in the type, what is it in the truth, substance, and reality of it?

And by direction given unto him to "*put off his shoes*," we are taught to cast away all fleshly imaginations and carnal affections, that by pure acts of faith we may behold this glory, – the glory of the only begotten of the Father.

I design not here to insist on the explication or confirmation of this glorious truth, concerning the constitution of the person of Christ in and by his incarnation. What I can comprehend, what I do believe concerning it, I have fully declared in a large peculiar treatise. Here I take the truth itself as known, or as it may be thence learned. My present business is only to stir up the minds of believers unto a due contemplations of the glory of Christ in the sacred, mysterious constitution of his person, as God and man in one. So much as we abide herein, so much do "*we live by the faith of the Son of God*;" – and God can, by a spirit of wisdom and revelation, open the eyes of our understandings, that we may behold this glory unto our ineffable

consolation and joy. And unto the diligent discharge of our duty herein I shall offer the ensuing directions:

1. Let us get it fixed on our souls and in our minds, that this glory of Christ in the divine constitution of his person is the best, the most noble, useful, beneficial object that we can be conversant about in our thoughts, or cleave unto in our affections.

What are all other things in comparison of the “knowledge of Christ?” In the judgement of the great apostle, they are but “*loss and dung*,” Phil. 3: 8-10. So they were to him; and if they are not so to us we are carnal.

What is the world, and what are the things thereof, which most men spend their thoughts about, and fix their affections on? The Psalmist gives his judgement about them, in comparison of a view of this glory of Christ, Ps. 4: 6, “*Many say, Who will show us any good?*” – Who will give and help us to attain so much in and of this world as will give rest and satisfaction unto our minds? That is the good inquired after. But, saith he, “*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*” The light of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus is that satisfactory good alone which I desire and seek after.

The Scripture reproaches the vanity and folly of the minds of men, in that “*they spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which profiteth not.*” They engage the vigour of their spirits about perishing things, when they have durable substance and riches proposed unto them.

How do men for the most part exercise their minds what are they conversant about in their thoughts?

Some by them “*make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;*” as Rom. 13: 14. They search about continually in their thoughts for objects suited unto their lusts and carnal affections, coining, framing, and stamping of them in their imaginations. They fix their eyes with delight on toads and serpents, with all noisome, filthy objects, – refusing, in the meantime, to behold the beauty and glory of the light of the sun. So is it with all that spend their thoughts about the objects of their sinful pleasures, – refusing to look up after one view of this glory of Christ.

Some keep their thoughts in continual exercise about the things of this world, as unto the advantages and emoluments which they expect

from them. Hereby are they transformed into the image of the world, becoming earthly, carnal, and vain. Is it because there is no God in Israel that these applications are made unto the idol of Ekron? That there is no glory, no desirableness in Christ for men to inquire after, and fix their minds upon? Oh the blindness, the darkness, the folly of poor sinners! Whom do they despise? and for what? Some, of more refined parts and notional minds, do arise unto a sedulous meditation on the works of creation and providence. Hence many excellent discourses on that subject, adorned with eloquence, are published among us? And a work this is worthy of our nature, and suited unto our rational capacities; yea, the first end of our natural endowment with them. But in all these things, there is no glory in comparison of what is proposed to us in the mysterious constitution of the person of Christ. The sun has no glory, the moon and stars no beauty, the order and influence of the heavenly bodies have no excellency, in comparison of it.

This is that which the Psalmist designs to declare, Pa 8, *“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.”*

He is engaged in a contemplation of the glory of God in his works; and he concludes that the fabric of heaven, with the moon and stars therein (for it was his meditation by night, when he beheld them), was exceeding glorious, and greatly to be admired. This casts his thoughts on the poor, weak, infirm nature of man, which seems as nothing in comparison of those glories above; but immediately hereon he falls into an admiration of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God, exalting that nature incomparably above all the works of creation in the person of Jesus Christ; as the apostle expounds this place, Heb. 2: 5, 6.

This, therefore, is the highest, the best, the most useful object of our thoughts and affections. He who has had a real view of this glory, though he know himself to be a poor, sinful, dying worm of the earth,

yet would he not be an angel in heaven, if thereby he should lose the sight of it; for this is the centre wherein all the lines of the manifestation of the divine glory do meet and rest.

Look unto the things of this world, – wives, children, possessions, estates, power, friends, and honour; how amiable are they! how desirable unto the thoughts of the most of men! But he who has obtained a view of the glory of Christ, will, in the midst of them all, say, “*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee,*” Ps. 73: 25; “*For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?*” Ps. 89: 6.

He himself, out of his infinite love and ineffable condescension, upon the sight and view of his church, and his own graces in her, wherewith she is adorned, does say, “*Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck,*” Song of Solomon 4: 9. How much more ought a believing soul, upon a view of the glory of Christ, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to say, Thou hast ravished my heart, taken it away from me! “*O thou whom my soul loveth,*” one glance of thy glorious beauty upon me has quite overcome me, – hath left no heart in me unto things here below! If it be not thus with us frequently, – if we value not this object of our minds and affections, – if we are not diligent in looking up unto him to behold his glory, – it is because we are carnal, and not in any good measure partakers of the promise, that “*our eyes shall see the King in his beauty.*”

2. Our second direction unto the same end is, that we diligently study the Scripture, and the revelations that are made of this glory of Christ therein. To behold it, is not a work of fancy or imagination; it is not conversing with an image framed by the art of men without, or that of our own fancy within, but of faith exercised on divine revelations. This direction he gives us himself, John 5: 39, “*Search the Scriptures; for they are they which testify of me.*” The way whereby this is done is fully set before us in the example of the holy prophets under the Old Testament, 1 Peter 1:11-13.

This principle is always to be retained in our minds in reading of the Scripture, – namely, that the revelation and doctrine of the person of Christ and his office, is the foundation whereon all other

instructions of the prophets and apostles for the edification of the church are built, and whereinto they are resolved; as is declared, Eph. 2: 20-22. So our Lord Jesus Christ himself at large makes it manifest, Luke 24: 26, 27, 45, 46. Lay aside the consideration hereof, and the Scriptures are no such thing as they pretend unto, – namely, a revelation of the glory of God in the salvation of the church; nor are those of the Old Testament so at this day unto the Jews, who own not this principle, 2 Cor. 3: 13-16. There are, therefore, such revelations of the person and glory of Christ treasured up in the Scripture, from the beginning unto the end of it, as may exercise the faith and contemplation of believers in this world, and shall never, during this life, be fully discovered or understood; and in divine meditations of these revelations does much of the life of faith consist.

There are three ways whereby the glory of Christ is represented unto us in the Scripture. First, By direct descriptions of his glorious person and incarnation. See, among other places, Gen. 3: 15; Ps. 2: 7-9, 45: 2-6, 68: 17, 18, 110; Isa. 6: 1-4, 9: 6; Zech. 3: 8; John 1: 1-3; Phil. 2: 6-8; Heb. 1: 1-3, 2: 14-16; Rev. 1: 17, 18. Secondly, By prophecies, promises, and express instructions concerning him, all leading unto the contemplation of his glory, which are innumerable. Thirdly, By the sacred institutions of divine worship under the Old Testament: for the end of them all was to represent unto the church the glory of Christ in the discharge of his office; as we shall see afterward.

We may take notice of an instance in one kind under the Old Testament, and of one and another under the New.

His personal appearances under the Old Testament carried in them a demonstration of his glory. Such was that in the vision which Isaiah had, “*when he saw his glory, and spake of him,*” chap. 6: 1, 2, “*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim,*” &c. It was a representation of the glory of the divine presence of Christ filling his human nature, the temple of his body, with a train of all-glorious graces. And if this typical representation of it was so glorious, as that the seraphim were not able steadfastly to behold it, but “*covered their faces*” upon its appearance, verse 2, how exceeding glorious is it in itself, as it is openly revealed in the Gospel!

Of the same nature are the immediate testimonies given unto him from heaven in the New Testament. So the apostle tells us, *“he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,”* 2 Peter 1: 17. The apostle intends the time of his transfiguration in the mount; for so he adds, verse 18, *“And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”*

Howbeit, at sundry other times he had the same testimony, or to the same purpose, from God, even the Father, in heaven. Herein God gave him honour and glory, which all those that believe in him should behold and admire; not only those who heard this testimony with their bodily ears, but all unto whom it is testified in the Scripture, are obliged to look after, and contemplate on, the glory of Christ, as thus revealed and proposed. From the throne of his excellency, by audible voices, by visible signs, by the opening of the heavens above, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, God testified unto him as his eternal Son, and gave him therein honour and glory. The thoughts of this divine testimony, and the glory of Christ therein, has often filled the hearts of some with Joy and delight.

This, therefore, in reading and studying the holy Scripture, we ought with all diligence to search and attend unto, as did the prophets of old (1 Peter 1: 11, 12), if we intend by them to be made *“wise unto salvation.”*

We should herein be as the merchant-man that seeks for pearls; he seeks for all sorts of them, but when he has found one of *“great price,”* he parts with all to make it his own, Matt. 13: 46, 46. The Scripture is the field, the place, the mine where we search and dig for pearls. See Prov. 2: 1-6. Every sacred truth that is made effectual unto the good of our souls, is a pearl whereby we are enriched; but when we meet with, when we fall upon this pearl of price, the glory of Christ, – this is that which the soul of a believer cleaves unto with joy.

Then do we find food for souls in the word of truth, then do we taste how gracious the Lord is therein, then is the Scripture full of refreshment unto us as a spring of living water, – when we are taken into blessed views of the glory of Christ therein. And we are in the best frame of duty, when the principal motive in our minds to contend

earnestly for retaining the possession of the Scripture against all that would deprive us of it, or discourage us from a daily diligent search into it, is this, – that they would take from us the only glass wherein we may behold the glory of Christ. This is the glory of the Scripture, that it is the great, yea, the only, outward means of representing unto us the glory of Christ; and he is the sun in the firmament of it, which only has light in itself, and communicates it unto all other things besides.

3. Another direction unto this same end is, that having attained the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ from the Scripture, or by the dispensation of the truth in the preaching of the gospel, we would esteem it our duty frequently to meditate thereon.

Want hereof is that fundamental mistake which keeps many among us so low in their grace, so regardless of their privileges. They hear of these things, they assent unto their truth, at least they do not gainsay them; but they never solemnly meditate upon them. This they esteem a world that is above them, or are ignorant totally of it, or esteem themselves not much concerned in it, or dislike it as fanaticism. For it is that which no considerations can engage a carnal mind to delight in. The mind must be spiritual and holy, freed from earthly affections and encumbrances, raised above things here below, that can in a due manner meditate on the glory of Christ. Therefore are the most strangers unto this duty, because they will not be at the trouble and charge of that mortification of earthly affections, – that extirpation of sensual inclinations, – that retirement from the occasions of life, which are required whereunto. (See the treatise on Owen's Spiritual-mindedness)

It is to be feared that there are some who profess religion with an appearance of strictness, who never separate themselves from all other occasions, to meditate on Christ and his glory; and yet, with a strange inconsistency of apprehensions, they will profess that they desire nothing more than to behold his glory in heaven for ever. But it is evident, even in the light of reason, that these things are irreconcilable. It is impossible that he who never meditates with delight on the glory of Christ here in this world, who labours not to behold it by faith as it is revealed in the Scripture, should ever have any real gracious desire to behold it in heaven. They may love and desire the fruition of their own imaginations; – they cannot do so of

the glory of Christ, whereof they are ignorant, and wherewith they are unacquainted. It is, therefore, to be lamented that men can find time for, and have inclinations to think and meditate on, other things, it may be earthly and vain; but have neither heart, nor inclination, nor leisure, to meditate on this glorious object. What is the faith and love which such men profess? How will they find themselves deceived in the issue!

4. *Let your occasional thoughts of Christ be many, and multiplied every day.* He is not far from us; we may make a speedy address unto him at any time. So the apostle informs us, Rom. 10: 6-8, "*Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*" For "*the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.*" The things that Christ did were done at a distance from us, and they are long since past. But, saith the apostle, "*The word*" of the Gospel wherein these things are revealed, and whereby an application is made of them unto our souls, is nigh unto us, even in our hearts; that is, if we are true believers, and have mixed the word with faith, – and so it exhibits Christ and all the benefits of his mediation unto us.

If, therefore, this word is in our hearts, Christ is nigh unto us. If we turn at any time into ourselves to converse with the word that abides in us, there we shall find him ready to receive us into communion with himself; that is, in the light of the knowledge of Christ which we have by the word, we may have sudden, occasional thoughts of him continually: and where our minds and affections are so filled with other things that we are not ready for converse with him who is thus nigh unto us by the word, we are spiritually indisposed.

So, to manifest how nigh he is unto us, it is said that "*he stands at the door, and knocks,*" Rev. 3: 20, in the continual tender that he makes of himself and his grace unto our souls. For he is always accompanied with the glorious train of his graces; and if they are not received, he himself is not so. It is to no purpose to boast of Christ, if we have not an evidence of his graces in our hearts and lives. But unto whom he is the hope of future glory, unto them he is the life of present grace.

Sometimes it may be that He is withdrawn from us, so as that we cannot hear his voice, nor behold his countenance, nor obtain any

sense of his love, though we seek him with diligence. In this state, all our thoughts and meditations concerning him will be barren and fruitless, bringing in no spiritual refreshment into our souls. And if we learn to be content with such lifeless, unaffecting thoughts of him as bring in no experience of his love, nor give us a real view of the glory of his person, we shall wither away as unto all the power of religion.

What is our duty in this case is so fully expressed by the spouse in the Song of Solomon, as represents it plainly unto the minds of believers, who have any experience of these things, chap. 3: 1-4, *“By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.”* The like account she gives of herself, and of her behaviour on the like occasion, chap. 5: 2-8.

This is the substance of what by this example we are instructed unto. The Lord Christ is pleased sometimes to withdraw himself from the spiritual experience of believers; as to any refreshing sense of his love, or the fresh communications of consolatory graces. Those who never had experience of any such thing, who never had any refreshing communion with him, cannot be sensible of his absence; – they never were so of his presence. But those whom he has visited, – to whom he has given of his loves, – with whom he has made his abode, – whom he has refreshed, relieved, and comforted, – in whom he has lived in the power of his grace, – they know what it is to be forsaken by him, though but for a moment. And their trouble is increased, when they seek him with diligence in the wonted ways of obtaining his presence, and cannot find him. Our duty, in this case, is to persevere in our inquiries after him, in prayer, meditation, mourning, reading and hearing of the Word, in all ordinances of divine worship, private and public, in diligent obedience, – until we find him, or he return unto us, as in former days.

It were well if all churches and professors now would manifest the same diligence herein as did the church of old in this example. Many of them, if they are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,

cannot but be sensible that the Lord Christ is variously withdrawn from them, if ever they had experience of the power of his presence. Yet are the generality of them far from the frame of heart here described in the spouse; for they are slothful, careless, negligent, and stir not up themselves to inquire after him, or his return unto their souls. So was it with Laodicea of old, so was it with Sardis, and so it is to be feared that it is with many at present. But to return.

Generally, Christ is nigh unto believers, and of a ready access; and the principal acting of the life of faith consist in the frequency of our thoughts concerning him; for hereby Christ lives in us, as he is said to do, Gal. 2: 20. This we cannot do, unless we have frequent thoughts of him and converse with him. It is often said among men, that one lives in another; this cannot be but where the affections of one are so engaged unto another, that night and day he thinks of him, and is thereby, as it were, present with him. So ought it to be between Christ and believers. He dwells in them by faith; but the acting of this life in them (as wherever life is, it will be in act and exercise) are proportionable unto their thoughts of him, and delight in him.

If, therefore, we would behold the glory of Christ, the present direction is, that on all occasions, and frequently when there are no occasions for it by the performance of other duties, we would abound in thoughts of him and his glory. I intend not at present fixed and stated meditations, which were spoken unto before; but such thoughts as are more transient, according as our opportunities are. And a great rebuke it ought to be unto us, when Christ has at any time in a day been long out of our minds. The spouse affirms that, ere she was aware, her soul made her as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, Song of Solomon 6: 12. It so fell out, that when she had no thoughts, no design or purpose, for attendance on communion with Christ, that she was surprised into a readiness and willingness unto it. So it will be with them that love him in sincerity. Their own souls, without previous designs or outward occasions, will frequently engage them in holy thoughts of him; which is the most eminent character of a truly spiritual Christian.

5. The next direction is, that all our thoughts concerning Christ and his glory should be accompanied with admiration, adoration, and thanksgiving. For this is such an object of our thoughts and affections as, in this life, we can never fully comprehend, – an ocean

whose depths we cannot look into. If we are spiritually renewed, all the faculties of our souls are enabled by grace to exert their respective powers towards this glorious object. This must be done in various duties, by the exercise of various graces, as they are to be acted by the distinct powers of the faculties of our minds. This is that which is intended where we are commanded *“to love the Lord with all our souls, with all our minds, with all our strength”* All the distinct powers of our souls are to be acted by distinct graces and duties in cleaving unto God by love. In heaven, when we are come to our centre, that state of rest and blessedness which our nature is ultimately capable of, nothing but one infinite, invariable object of our minds and affections, received by vision, can render that state uninterrupted and unchangeable. But while we are here we know or see but in part, and we must also act our faith and love on part of that glory, which is not at once entirely proposed unto us, and which as yet we cannot comprehend. Wherefore we must act various graces in great variety about it; – some at one time, some at another, according unto the powers of all our renewed faculties. Of this sort are those mentioned of adoration, admiration, and thanksgiving; which are those acts of our minds wherein all others do issue when the object is incomprehensible. For unto them we are enabled by grace.

One end of his illustrious coming unto the judgement of the last day is, that he may be *“admired in all them that believe,”* 2 Thess. 1: 10. Even believers themselves shall be filled with an overwhelming admiration upon his glorious appearance. Or if the meaning be, not that he shall be admired by them, but admired in them, because of the mighty works of his grace and power in their redemption, sanctification, resurrection, and glory, it is to the same purpose, – he *“comes to be admired.”* And, according to the prospect which we have of that glory ought our admiration to be.

And this admiration will issue in adoration and thanksgiving; whereof we have an eminent instance and example in the whole church of the redeemed, Rev. 5: 9-14, *“They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the*

throne, and of the living creatures, and of the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

The design of this Discourse is no more, but that when by faith we have attained a view of the glory of Christ, in our contemplations on his person, we should not pass it over as a notion of truth which we assent unto, – namely, that he is thus glorious in himself, – but endeavour to affect our hearts with it, as that wherein our own principal interest does lie; wherein it will be effectual unto the transformation of our souls into his image.

But some, it may be, will say, at least I fear some may truly say, that these things do not belong unto them; they do not find that ever they had any benefit by them: they hope to be saved as well as others by the mediation of Christ; but as to this beholding of his glory by constant meditation and acting of faith therein, they know nothing of it, nor are concerned in it. The doctrine which they are taught out of the Scripture concerning the person of Christ, they give their assent unto; but his glory they hope they shall see in another world; – here they never yet inquired after it.

So it will be. It is well if these things be not only neglected, because the minds of men are carnal, and cannot discern spiritual things, but also despised, because they have an enmity unto them. It is not for all to walk in these retired paths; – not for them who are negligent and slothful whose minds are earthly and carnal. Nor can they herein sit at the feet of Christ with Mary when she chose the better part, who, like Martha, are cumbered about many things here in this world. Those whose principal design is to add unto their present enjoyments (in the midst of the prosecution whereof they are commonly taken from them, so as that their thoughts do perish, because not accomplished) will never understand these things. Much less will they do so, whose work it is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof.

They must make it their design to be heavenly-minded who will find a relish in these things. Those who are strangers unto holy meditation in general will be strangers unto this mystery in a peculiar manner.

Some men can think of the world, of their relations, and the manifold occasions of life; but as unto the things that are above, and within the veil, they are not concerned in them.

With some it is otherwise. They profess their desire to behold the glory of Christ by faith; but they find it, as they complain, too high and difficult for them. They are at a loss in their minds, and even overwhelmed, when they begin to view his glory. They are like the disciples who saw him in his transfiguration; – they were filled with amazement, and knew not what to say, or said they knew not what. And I do acknowledge, that the weakness of our minds in the comprehension of this eternal glory of Christ, and their instability in meditations thereon, whence we cannot steadfastly look on it or behold it, gives us an afflicting, abasing consideration of our present state and condition. And I shall say no more unto this case but this alone: When faith can no longer hold open the eyes of our understandings unto the beholding the Sun of Righteousness shining in his beauty, nor exercise orderly thoughts about this incomprehensible object, it will retake itself unto that holy admiration which we have spoken unto; and therein it will put itself forth in pure acts of love and complacency.

PART I • CHAPTER 4

The Glory of Christ in his Susception of the Office of a Mediator – First in his Condescension

The things whereof we have thus far discoursed, relating immediately unto the person of Christ in itself, may seem to have somewhat of difficulty in them unto such whose minds are not duly exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things. Unto others they are evident in their own experience, and instructive unto them that are willing to learn. That which remains will be yet more plain unto the understanding and capacity of the lowliest believer. And this is, the glory of Christ in his office of mediator, and the discharge thereof.

In our beholding of the glory of Christ herein does the exercise of faith in this life principally consist; so the apostle declares it, Phil. 3: 8, 10, *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”*. This therefore, we must treat of somewhat more at large.

“There is one God,” saith the apostle, *“and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”* 1 Tim. 2: 5. In that great difference between God and man occasioned by our sin and apostasy from him, which of itself could issue in nothing but the utter ruin of the whole race of mankind, there was none in heaven or earth, in their original nature and operations, who was meet or able to make up righteous peace between them. Yet must this be done by a mediator, or cease for ever.

This mediator could not be God himself absolutely considered; for *“a mediator is not of one, but God is one,”* Gal. 3: 20. Whatever God might do herein in a way of sovereign grace, yet he could not do

it in the way of mediation; which yet was necessary unto his own glory, as we have at large discoursed elsewhere.

And as for creatures, there was none in heaven or earth that was meet to undertake this office. For *“if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?”* 1 Sam. 2: 25. There is not *“any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both,”* Job 9:33.

In this state of things the Lord Christ, as the Son of God, said, *“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; and, lo, I come to do thy will,”* Heb. 10: 5, 9. By the assumption of our nature into union with himself, in his own divine person he became every way meet for the discharge of this office, and undertakes it accordingly.

That which we inquire after at present, is, the glory of Christ herein, and how we may behold that glory. And there are three things wherein we may take a prospect of it.

First, In his assumption of this office.

Second, In his discharge of it.

Third, In the event and consequence thereof, or what ensued thereon.

First In the assumption of this office we may behold the glory of Christ - I. in his *condescension*; II. in his *love*.

I. We may behold this glory in his infinite condescension to take this office on him, and our nature to be his own unto that end. It did not befall him by lot or chance; – it was not imposed on him against his will; – it belonged not unto him by any necessity of nature or condition, he stood not in need of it; – it was no addition unto him; but of his own mind and accord he graciously condescended unto the assumption and discharge of it.

So the apostle expresses it, Phil. 2: 5-8, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”*

It was the mind that was in Jesus Christ which is proposed unto our consideration and imitation, – what he was inclined and disposed

unto from himself and his own mind alone. And that in general which is ascribed unto him is “kenósis”, exinanition [*archaic word*], or self-emptying; he emptied himself. This the ancient church called his “sungkatabasis” [meaning a descent of some type], as we do his condescension; an act of which kind in God is called the “*humbling of himself*,” Ps. 113: 6.

Wherefore, the assumption of our nature for the discharge of the office of mediation therein was an infinite condescension in the Son of God, wherein he is exceedingly glorious in the eyes of believers.

And I shall do these three things: first, show in general *the greatness of his condescension*; second, declare *the special nature of it* and third, take what view we are able of *the glory of Christ therein*.

1. Such is the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, that it is said of God that he “dwelleth on high,” and “humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth,” Ps. 113: 5, 6. He condescends from the prerogative of his excellency to behold, to look upon, to take notice of, the most glorious things in heaven above, and the greatest things in the earth below. All his respect unto the creatures, the most glorious of them, is an act of infinite condescension. And it is so on two accounts.

a) Because of the infinite distance that is between his essence, nature, or being, and that of the creatures. Hence all nations before him “*are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance*,” yea, that they “*are as nothing, that they are counted unto him less than nothing, and vanity*.” All being is essentially in him, and in comparison thereunto all other things are as nothing. And there are no measures, there is no proportion between infinite being and nothing, – nothing that should induce a regard from the one unto the other.

Wherefore, the infinite, essential greatness of the nature of God, with his infinite distance from the nature of all creatures thereby, causes all his dealings with them to be in the way of condescension or humbling himself. So it is expressed, Isa. 57: 15, “*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity . . . I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*.” He is so the high and lofty one, and so inhabits eternity, or exists in his own eternal being, that it is an act of mere grace in him to take

notice of things below; and therefore he does it in a special manner of those whom the world does most despise.

b) It arises from his infinite self-sufficiency unto all the acts and ends of his own eternal blessedness. What we have a regard unto, what we respect and desire, it is that it may add unto our satisfaction. So it is, so it must be, with every creature; no creature is self-sufficient unto its own blessedness. The human nature of Christ himself in heaven is not so; it lives in God, and God in it, in a full dependence on God, and in receiving blessed and glorious communications from him. No rational creature, angel or man, can do, think, act any thing, but it is all to add to their perfection and satisfaction; – they are not self-sufficient. God alone wants nothing, stands in need of nothing; nothing can be added unto him, seeing he “*giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things,*” Acts 17: 25.

The whole creation, in all its excellency, cannot contribute one mite unto the satisfaction or blessedness of God. He has it all in infinite perfection from himself and in his own nature. Our goodness extends not unto him. A man cannot profit God, as he may profit his neighbour. “*If thou sinnest, what does thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?*” God loses nothing of his own self-sufficiency and blessedness therein by all this. And “*if thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?*” Job 35: 6, 7. And from hence also it follows that all God’s concernment in the creation is by an act of condescension.

How glorious, then, is the condescension of the Son of God in his assumption of the office of mediation! For if such be the perfection of the divine nature, and its distance so absolutely infinite from the whole creation, – and if such be his self-sufficiency unto his own eternal blessedness, as that nothing can be taken from him, nothing added unto him, so that every regard in him unto any of the creatures is an act of self-humiliation and condescension from the prerogative of his being and state, – what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the glory of that condescension in the Son of God, whereby he took our nature upon him, took it to be his own, in order unto a discharge of the office of mediation on our behalf?

2. But, that we may the better behold the glory of Christ herein, we may briefly consider the special nature of this condescension, and wherein it does consist.

But whereas not only the denial, but misapprehensions hereof, have pestered the church of God in all ages, we must, in the first place, reject them, and then declare the truth.

a) This condescension of the Son of God did not consist in a laying aside, or parting with, or separation from, the divine nature, so as that he should cease to be God by being man. The foundation of it lay in this, that he was “*in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*” Phil. 2:6; – that is, being really and essentially God in his divine nature, he professed himself therein to be equal with God, or the person of the Father. He was in the form of God, – that is, he was God, participant of the Divine nature, for God has no form but that of his essence and being; and hence he was equal with God, in authority, dignity, and power. Because he was in the form of God, he must be equal with God; for there is order in the Divine Persons, but no inequality in the Divine Being. So the Jews understood him, that when he said, “*God was his Father, he made himself equal with God.*” For in his so saying, he ascribed unto himself equal power with the Father, as unto all divine operations. “*My Father,*” saith he, “*worketh hitherto, and I work,*” John 5: 17, 18. And they by whom his divine nature is denied do cast this condescension of Christ quite out of our religion, as that which has no reality or substance in it. But we shall speak of them afterward.

Being in this state, it is said that he took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, Phil. 2: 7. This is his condescension. It is not said that he ceased to be in the form of God; but continuing so to be, he “*took upon him the form of a servant*” in our nature: he became what he was not, but he ceased not to be what he was. So he testifies of himself, John 3: 13, “*No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven.*” Although he was then on earth as the Son of man, yet he ceased not to be God thereby; – in his divine nature he was then also in heaven.

He who is God, can no more be not God, than he who is not God can be God; and our difference with the Socinians herein is, – we believe that Christ being God, was made man for our sakes; they say, that being only a man, he was made a god for his own sake.

This, then, is the foundation of the glory of Christ in this condescension, the life and soul of all heavenly truth and mysteries, –

namely, that the Son of God becoming in time to be what he was not, the Son of man, ceased not thereby to be what he was, even the eternal Son of God. Wherefore, –

b) Much less did this condescension consist in the conversion of the divine nature into the human, – which was the imagination of some of the Arians of old; and we have yet (to my own knowledge) some that follow them in the same dotage. They say that the “Word which was in the beginning,” by which all things were made, being in itself an effect of the divine will and power, was in the fullness of time turned into flesh; – that is, the substance of it was so, as the water in the miracle wrought by our Saviour was turned into wine; for, by an act of the divine power of Christ, it ceased to be water substantially, and was wine only, – not water mixed with wine. So these men suppose a substantial change of the one nature into the other, – of the divine nature into the human, – like what the Papists imagine in their transubstantiation. So they say God was made man, his essence being turned into that of a man.

But this no way belongs unto the condescension of Christ. We may call it Ichabod, – it has no glory in it. It destroys both his natures, and leaves him a person in whom we are not concerned. For, according unto this imagination, that divine nature, wherein he was in the form of God, did in its own form cease to be, yea, was utterly destroyed, as being substantially changed into the nature of man, as the water did cease to be when it was turned into wine; and that human nature which was made thereof has no alliance or kindred unto us or our nature, seeing it was not “made of a woman,” but of the substance of the Word.

c) There was not in this condescension the least change or alteration in the divine nature. Eutyches and those that followed him of old conceived that the two natures of Christ, the divine and human, were mixed and compounded, as it were, into one. And this could not be without an alteration in the divine nature, for it would be made to be essentially what it was not; – for one nature has but one and the same essence.

But, as we said before, although the Lord Christ himself in his person was made to be what he was not before, in that our nature hereby was made to be his, yet his divine nature was not so. There is in it neither “*variableness nor shadow of turning*.” It abode the same

in him, in all its essential properties, acting, and blessedness, as it was from eternity. It neither did, acted, nor suffered any thing but what is proper unto the Divine Being. The Lord Christ did and suffered many things in life and death, in his own person, by his human person, wherein the divine neither did nor suffered anything at all – although, in the doing of them, his person be denominated from that nature; so, “*God purchased his church with his own blood,*” Acts 20:28.

d) It may, then, be said, What did the Lord Christ, in this condescension, with respect unto his divine nature? The apostle tells us that he “*humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation,*” Phil. 2: 7, 8. He veiled the glory of his divine nature in ours, and what he did therein, so as that there was no outward appearance or manifestation of it. The world hereon was so far from looking on him as the true God, that it believed him not to be a good man. Hence they could never bear the least intimation of his divine nature, supposing themselves secured from any such thing, because they looked on him with their eyes to be a man, – as he was, indeed, no less truly and really than any one of themselves. Wherefore, on that testimony given of himself, “*Before Abraham was, I am,*” which asserts a pre-existence from eternity in another nature than what they saw, – they were filled with rage, and “*took up stones to cast at him,*” John 8: 58,59. And they gave reason of their madness, John 10:33, – namely, that “*he, being a man, should make himself to be God.*” This was such a thing, they thought, as could never enter into the heart of a wise and sober man, – namely, that being so, owning himself to be such, he should yet say of himself that he was God. This is that which no reason can comprehend, which nothing in nature can parallel or illustrate, that one and the same person should be both God and man. And this is the principal plea of the Socinians at this day, who, through the Mohammedans, succeed unto the Jews in an opposition unto the divine nature of Christ.

But all this difficulty is solved by the glory of Christ in this condescension; for although in himself, or his own divine person, he was “*over all, God blessed for ever,*” yet he humbled himself for the salvation of the church, unto the eternal glory of God, to take our nature upon him, and to be made man: and those who cannot see a divine glory in his so doing, do neither know him, nor love him, nor believe in him, nor do any way belong unto him.

So is it with the men of these abominations. Because they cannot behold the glory hereof, they deny the foundation of our religion, – namely, the divine person of Christ. Seeing he would be made man, he shall be esteemed by them no more than a man. So do they reject that glory of God, his infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace, wherein he is more concerned than in the whole creation. And they dig up the root of all evangelical truths, which are nothing but branches from it.

It is true, and must be confessed, that herein it is that our Lord Jesus Christ is “*a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence*” unto the world. If we should confess him only as a prophet, a man sent by God, there would not be much contest about him, nor opposition unto him. The Mohammedans do all acknowledge it, and the Jews would not long deny it; for their hatred against him was, and is, solely because he professed himself to be God, and as such was believed on in the world. And at this day, partly through the insinuation of the Socinians, and partly from the efficacy of their own blindness and unbelief, multitudes are willing to grant him to be a prophet sent of God, who do not, who will not, who cannot, believe the mystery of this condescension in the assumption of our nature, nor see the glory of it. But take this away, and all our religion is taken away with it. Farewell Christianity, as to the mystery, the glory, the truth, the efficacy of it; – let a refined heathenism be established in its room. But this is the rock on which the church is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

e) This condescension of Christ was not by a phantasm or an appearance only. One of the first heresies that pestered the church immediately after the days of the apostles was this, that all that was done or suffered by Christ as a man were not the acts, doings or sufferings of one that was truly and really a man, but an outward representation of things, like the appearance of angels in the shape of men, eating and drinking, under the Old Testament; and suitably hereunto some in our days have spoken, – namely, that there was only an appearance of Christ in the man Jesus at Jerusalem, in whom he suffered no more than in other believers. But the ancient Christians told those men the truth, – namely, that “as they had feigned unto themselves an imaginary Christ, so they should have an imaginary salvation only.”

But the true nature of this divine condescension does consist in these three things: –

First, The eternal person of the Son of God, or the divine nature in the person of the Son, did, by an ineffable act of his divine power and love, assume our nature into an individual subsistence in or with himself; that is, to be his own, even as the divine nature is his.” This is the infallible foundation of faith, even to them who can comprehend very little of these divine mysteries. They can and do believe that the Son of God did take our nature to be his own; so as that whatever was done therein was done by him, as it is with every other man. Every man has human nature appropriated unto himself by an individual subsistence, whereby he becomes to be that man which he is and not another; or that nature which is common unto all, becomes in him to be peculiarly his own, as if there were none partaker of it but himself. Adam, in his first creation, when all human nature was in him alone, was no more that individual man which he was, than every man is now the man that he is, by his individual subsistence. So the Lord Christ taking that nature which is common unto all into a peculiar subsistence in his own person, it becomes his, and he the man Christ Jesus. This was the mind that was in him.

Second, By reason of this assumption of our nature, with his doing and suffering therein whereby he was found in fashion as a man, the glory of his divine person was veiled, and he made himself of no reputation. This also belongs unto his condescension, as the first general effect and fruit of it. But we have spoken of it before.

Third, It is also to be observed, that in the assumption of our nature to be his own, he did not change it into a thing divine and spiritual; but preserved it entire in all its essential properties and actings. Hence it really did and suffered, was tried, tempted, and forsaken, as the same nature in any other man might do and be. That nature (as it was peculiarly his, and therefore he, or his person therein) was exposed unto all the temporary evils which the same nature is subject unto in any other person.

This is a short general view of this incomprehensible condescension of the Son of God, as it is described by the apostle, Phil. 2: 5-8. And this is that wherein in an especial manner we are to behold the glory of Christ by faith while we are in this world.

But had we the tongue of men and angels, we were not able in any just measure to express the glory of this condescension; for it is the most ineffable effect of the divine wisdom of the Father and of the love of the Son, – the highest evidence of the care of God towards mankind. What can be equal unto it? what can be like it? It is the glory of Christian religion, and the animating soul of all evangelical truth. This carries the mystery of the wisdom of God above the reason or understanding of men and angels, to be the object of faith and admiration only. A mystery it is that becomes the greatness of God, with his infinite distance from the whole creation, – Which renders it unbecoming him that all his ways and works should be comprehensible by any of his creatures, Job 11: 7-9; Rom. 11: 33-36.

He who was eternally in the form of God, – that is, was essentially so, God by nature, equally participant of the same divine nature with God the Father; “*God over all, blessed for ever;*” who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth, – he takes on him the nature of man, takes it to be his own, whereby he was no less truly a man in time than he was truly God from eternity. And to increase the wonder of this mystery, because it was necessary unto the end he designed, he so humbled himself in this assumption of our nature, as to make himself of no reputation in this world, – yea, unto that degree, that he said of himself that he was a worm, and no man, in comparison of them who were of any esteem.

We speak of these things in a poor, low, broken manner, – we teach them as they are revealed in the Scripture, – we labour by faith to adhere unto them as revealed; but when we come into a steady, direct view and consideration of the thing itself, our minds fail, our hearts tremble, and we can find no rest but in a holy admiration of what we cannot comprehend. Here we are at a loss, and know that we shall be so while we are in this world; but all the ineffable fruits and benefits of this truth are communicated unto them that do believe.

It is with reference hereunto that that great promise concerning him is given unto the church, Isa. 8: 14, “*He shall be for a sanctuary*” (namely, unto all that believe, as it is expounded, 1 Peter 2: 7, 8); “*but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence,*” – “*even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.*”

He is herein a sanctuary, an assured refuge unto all that betake themselves unto him. What is it that any man in distress, who flies whereunto, may look for in a sanctuary? A supply of all his wants, a deliverance from all his fears, a defence against all his dangers, is proposed unto him therein. Such is the Lord Christ herein unto sin-distressed souls; he is a refuge unto us in all spiritual diseases and disconsolation, Heb. 6: 18. See the exposition of the place. Are we, or any of us, burdened with a sense of sin? are we perplexed with temptations? are we bowed down under the oppression. of any spiritual adversary? do we, on any of these accounts, “*walk in darkness and have no light?*” One view of the glory of Christ herein is able to support us and relieve us.

Unto whom we retake ourselves for relief in any case, we have regard to nothing but their will and their power. If they have both, we are sure of relief. And what shall we fear in the will of Christ as unto this end? What will he not do for us? He who thus emptied and humbled himself, who so infinitely condescended from the prerogative of his glory in his being and self sufficiency, in the assumption of our nature for the discharge of the office of a mediator on our behalf, – will he not relieve us in all our distresses? will he not do all for us we stand in need of, that we may be eternally saved? will he not be a sanctuary unto us? Nor have we hereon any ground to fear his power; for, by this infinite condescension to be a suffering man, he lost nothing of his power as God omnipotent, – nothing of his infinite wisdom or glorious grace. He could still do all that he could do as God from eternity. If there be any thing, therefore, in a coalescence of infinite power with infinite condescension, to constitute a sanctuary for distressed sinners, it is all in Christ Jesus. And if we see him not glorious herein, it is because there is no light of faith in us.

This, then, is the rest wherewith we may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshment. Herein is he “*a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*” Hereon he says, “*I have satiated the weary soul, and have refreshed every sorrowful soul.*” Under this consideration it is that, in all evangelical promises and invitations for coming to him, he is proposed unto distressed sinners as their only sanctuary.

Herein is he “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*” unto the unbelieving and disobedient, who stumble at the word. They cannot, they will not, see the glory of this condescension; – they neither desire nor labour so to do, – yea, they hate it and despise it. Christ in it is “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*” unto them. Wherefore they choose rather utterly to deny his divine person than allow that he did thus abase himself for our sakes. Rather than they will own this glory, they will allow him no glory. A man they say he was, and no more; and this was his glory. This is that principle of darkness and unbelief which works effectually at this day in the minds of many. They think it an absurd thing, as the Jews did of old, that he, being a man, should be God also; or, on the other hand, that the Son of God should thus condescend to take our nature on him. This they can see no glory in, no relief, no refuge, no refreshment unto their souls in any of their distresses; therefore do they deny his divine person. Here faith triumphs against them; it finds that to be a glorious sanctuary which they cannot at all discern.

But it is not so much the declaration or vindication of this glory of Christ which I am at present engaged in, as an exhortation unto the practical contemplation of it in a way of believing. And I know that among many this is too much neglected; yea, of all the evils which I have seen in the days of my pilgrimage, now drawing to their close, there is none so grievous as the public contempt of the principal mysteries of the Gospel among them that are called Christians. Religion, in the profession of some men, is withered in its vital principles, weakened in its nerves and sinews; but thought to be put off with outward gaiety and bravery.

But my exhortation is unto diligence in the contemplation of this glory of Christ, and the exercise of our thoughts about it. Unless we are diligent herein, it is impossible we should be steady in the principal acts of faith, or ready unto the principal duties of obedience.

The principal act of faith respects the divine person of Christ, as all Christians must acknowledge. This we can never secure (as has been declared) if we see not his glory in this condescension: and whoever reduces his notions unto experience, will find that herein his faith stands or falls.

And the principal duty of our obedience is self-denial, with readiness for the cross. Hereunto the consideration of this

condescension of Christ is the principal evangelical motive, and that whereinto our obedience in it is to be resolved; as the apostle declares, Phil. 2: 5-8. And no man does deny himself in a due manner, who does it not on the consideration of the self-denial of the Son of God. But a prevalent motive this is thereunto. For what are the things wherein we are to deny ourselves, or forego what we pretend to have a right unto? It is in our goods, our liberties, our relations, – our lives. And what are they, any or all of them, in themselves, or unto us, considering our condition, and the end for which we were made? Perishing things, which, whether we will or no, within a few days death will give us an everlasting separation from, under the power of a fever or an asthma, &c., as unto our interest in them.

But how incomparable with respect hereunto is that condescension of Christ, whereof we have given an account! If, therefore, we find an unwillingness in us, a tergiversation in our minds about these things, when called unto them in a way of duty, one view by faith of the glory of Christ in this condescension, and what he parted from therein when he “*made himself of no reputation,*” will be an effectual cure of that sinful distemper.

Herein, then, I say, we may by faith behold the glory of Christ, as we shall do it by sight hereafter. If we see no glory in it, if we discern not that which is matter of eternal admiration, we walk in darkness. It is the most ineffable effect of divine wisdom and grace. Where are our hearts and minds, if we can see no glory in it? know in the contemplation of it, it will quickly overwhelm our reason, and bring our understanding into a loss: but unto this loss do I desire to be brought every day; for when faith can no more act itself in comprehension, when it finds the object it is fixed on too great and glorious to be brought into our minds and capacities, it will issue (as we said before) in holy admiration, humble adoration, and joyful thanksgiving. In and by its acting in them does it fill the soul with “*joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*”

PART I • CHAPTER 5

The Glory of Christ in this Love

In the assumption and discharge of the mediatory office by the Son of God, the Scripture does most eminently represent, –

II. His Love, as the sole impelling and leading cause thereof, Gal. 2: 20; 1 John 3: 16; Rev. 1: 5.

Herein is he glorious, in a way and manner incomprehensible; for in the glory of divine love the chief brightness of glory does consist. There is nothing of dread or terror accompanying it, – nothing but what is amiable and infinitely refreshing. Now, that we may take a view of the glory of Christ herein by faith, the nature of it must be inquired into.

1. The eternal disposing cause of the whole work wherein the Lord Christ was engaged by the assumption of this office, for the redemption and salvation of the church, is the love of the Father. Hereunto it is constantly ascribed in the Scripture. And this love of the Father acted itself in his eternal decrees, “before the foundation of the world,” Eph. 1: 4; and afterward in the sending of his Son to render it effectual, John 3: 16. Originally, it is his eternal election of a portion of mankind to be brought unto the enjoyment of himself, through the mystery of the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit, 2 Thess. 2: 13, 16; Eph. 1: 9; 1 Peter 1: 2.

This eternal act of the will of God the Father does not contain in it an actual approbation of, and complacency in, the state and condition of those that are elected; but only designs that for them on the account whereof they shall be accepted and approved. And it is called his love on sundry accounts.

a) Because it is an act suited unto that glorious excellency of his nature wherein he is love; for “*God is love*,” 1 John 4: 8, 9. And the first egress of the divine properties must, therefore, be in an act of communicative love. And whereas this election, being an eternal act of the will of God, can have no moving cause but what is in himself, –

if we could look into all the treasures of the divine excellencies, we should find none whereunto it could be so properly ascribed as unto love. Wherefore, –

b) It is styled Love, because it was free and undeserved, as unto anything on our part; for whatever good is done unto any altogether undeserved, if it be with a design of their profit and advantage, it is an act of love, and can have no other cause. So is it with us in respect of eternal election. There was nothing in us, nothing foreseen, as that which, from ourselves, would be in us, that should any way move the will of God unto this election; for whatever is good in the best of men is an effect of it, Eph. 1: 4. Whereas, therefore, it tends unto our eternal good, the spring of it must be love. And, –

c) The fruits or effects of it are inconceivable acts of love. It is by multiplied acts of love that it is made effectual; John 3: 16; Jer. 31: 3; Eph. 1: 3-6; 1 John 4: 8, 9, 16.

2. This is the eternal spring which is derived unto the church through the mediation of Christ. Wherefore, that which put all the design of this eternal love of the Father into execution, and wrought out the accomplishment of it, was the love of the Son, which we inquire after; and light may be given unto it in the ensuing observations: –

a) The whole number or society of the elect were creatures made in the image of God, and thereby in a state of love with him. All that they were, had, or hoped for, were effects of divine goodness and love. And the *life* of their souls was *love unto God*. And a blessed state it was, preparatory for the eternal life of love in heaven.

b) From this state they *fell by sin* into a state of enmity with God; which is comprehensive of all miseries, temporal and eternal.

c) Notwithstanding this woeful catastrophe of our first state, yet our nature, on many accounts, was recoverable unto the enjoyment of God; as I have at large elsewhere declared.

d) In this condition, the *first act of love* in Christ towards us was in pity and compassion. A creature made in the image of God, and fallen into misery, yet capable of recovery, is the proper object of divine compassion. That which is so celebrated in the Scripture, as the bowels, the pity, the compassion of God, is the acting of divine love towards us on the consideration of our distress and misery. But all compassion ceases towards them whose condition is irrecoverable.

Wherefore the Lord Christ pitied not the angels that fell, because their nature was not to be relieved. Of this compassion in Christ, see Heb. 2: 14-16; Isa. 63: 9.

e) As then we lay under the eye of Christ in our misery, we were the objects of his pity and compassion; but as he looked on us as recoverable out of that state, his love worked in and by *delight*. It was an inconceivable delight unto him, to take a prospect of the deliverance of mankind unto the glory of God; which is also an act of love. See this divinely expressed, Prov. 8: 30, 31, as that place has been elsewhere explained. [in Owen 's work "Christologia" Chapter IV]

f) If it be inquired, whence this compassion and delight in him should arise, what should be the cause of them, that he who was eternally blessed in his own self-sufficiency should so deeply concern himself in our lost, forlorn condition? I say it did so merely from the infinite love and goodness of his own nature, without the least procuring inducement from us or any thing in us, Tit. 3: 5.

g) In this his readiness, willingness, and delight, springing from love and compassion, the *counsel* of God concerning the way of our recovery is, as it were, proposed unto him. Now, this was a way of great difficulties and perplexities unto himself, – that is, unto his person as it was to be constituted. To the divine nature nothing is grievous, – nothing is difficult; but he was to have another nature, wherein he was to undergo the difficulties of this way and work. It was required of him that he should pity us until he had none left to pity himself when he stood in need of it, – that he should pursue his delight to save us until his own soul was heavy and sorrowful unto death, – that he should relieve us in our sufferings by suffering the same things that we should have done. But he was not in the least hereby deterred from undertaking this work of love and mercy for us; yea, his love rose on this proposal like the waters of a mighty stream against opposition. For hereon he says, "*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;*" – it is my delight to do it, Heb. 10: 5-7; Isa. 50: 5-7.

h) Being thus inclined, disposed, and ready, in the eternal love of his divine person, to undertake the office of mediation and the work of our redemption, a body was prepared for him. In this body or human nature, made his own, he was to make this love effectual in all its inclinations and acting. It was provided for him unto this end, and

filled with all grace in a way unmeasurable, especially with fervent love unto mankind. And hereby it became a meet instrument to actuate his eternal love in all the fruits of it.

i) It is hence evident, that this glorious love of Christ does not consist alone in the eternal acting of his divine person, or the divine nature in his person. Such, indeed, is the love of the Father, – namely, his eternal purpose for the communication of grace and glory, with his acquiescence therein; but there is more in the love of Christ. For when he exercised this love he was man also, and not God only. And in none of those eternal acts of love could the human nature of Christ have any interest or concern; yet is the love of the *man* Christ Jesus celebrated in the Scripture.

j) Wherefore this love of Christ which we inquire after is the love of his person, – that is, which he in his own person acts in and by his distinct natures, according unto their distinct essential properties. And the acts of love in these distinct natures are infinitely distinct and different; yet are they all acts of one and the same person. So, then, whether that act of love in Christ which we would at any time consider, be an eternal act of the divine nature in the person of the Son of God; or whether it be an act of the human, performed in time by the gracious faculties and powers of that nature, it is still the love of one and the self same person, – Christ Jesus.

It was an act of inexpressible love in him, that he assumed our nature, Heb. 2: 14, 17. But it was an act in and of his divine nature only; for it was antecedent unto the existence of his human nature, which could not, therefore, concur therein. His laying down his life for us was an act of inconceivable love, 1 John 3: 16. Yet was it only an act of the human nature, wherein he offered himself and died. But both the one and the other were acts of his divine person; whence it is said that God laid down his life for us, and purchased the church with his own blood.

This is that love of Christ wherein he is glorious, and wherein we are by faith to behold his glory. A great part of the blessedness of the saints in heaven, and their triumph therein, consists in their beholding of this glory of Christ, – in their thankful contemplation of the fruits of it. See Rev. 5: 9, 10, &c.

The illustrious brightness wherewith this glory shines in heaven, the all-satisfying sweetness which the view of it gives unto the souls

of the saints there possessed of glory, are not by us conceivable, nor to be expressed. Here, this love passeth knowledge, – there, we shall comprehend the dimensions of it. Yet even here, if we are not slothful and carnal, we may have a refreshing prospect of it; and where comprehension fails, let admiration take place.

My present business is, to exhort others unto the contemplation of it, though it be but a little, a very little, a small portion of it, that I can conceive; and less than that very little that I can express. Yet may it be my duty to excite not only myself, but others also, unto due inquiries after it; unto which end I offer the things ensuing.

1. *Labour that your minds may continually be fitted and prepared for such heavenly contemplations.* If they are carnal and sensual, or need with earthly things, a due sense of this love of Christ and its glory will not abide in them. Virtue and vice, in their highest degrees, are not more diametrically opposite and inconsistent in the same mind, than are a habitual course of sensual, worldly thoughts and a due contemplation of the glory of the love of Christ; yea, an earnestness of spirit, pregnant with a multitude of thoughts about the lawful occasions of life, is obstructive of all due communion with the Lord Jesus Christ herein.

Few there are whose minds are prepared in a due manner for this duty. The actions and communications of the most evidence what is the inward frame of their souls. They rove up and down in their thoughts, which are continually led by their affections into the corners of the earth. It is in vain to call such persons unto contemplations of the glory of Christ in his love. A holy composure of mind, by virtue of spiritual principles, an inclination to seek after refreshment in heavenly things, and to bathe the soul in the fountain of them, with constant apprehensions of the excellency of this divine glory, are required hereunto.

2. *Be not satisfied with general notions concerning the love of Christ, which represent no glory unto the mind, wherewith many deceive themselves.* All who believe his divine person, profess a valuation of his love, – and think them not Christians who are otherwise minded; but they have only general notions, and not any distinct conceptions of it, and really know not what it is. To deliver us from this snare, peculiar meditations on its principal concerns are required of us.

a) Whose love it is, – namely, of the divine person of the Son of God. He is expressly called God, with respect unto the exercise of this love, that we may always consider whose it is, 1 John 3: 16, “Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us.”

b) By what ways and means this wonderful love of the Son of God does act itself, – namely, in the divine nature, by eternal acts of wisdom, goodness, and grace proper thereunto; and in the human, by temporary acts of pity or compassion, with all the fruits of them in doing and suffering for us. See Eph 3: 19; Heb. 2: 14, 15; Rev. 1: 5.

c) What is the freedom of it, as to any desert on our part, 1 John 4: 10. It was hatred, not love, that we in ourselves deserved; which is a consideration suited to fill the soul with self-abasement, – the best of frames in the contemplation of the glory of Christ.

d) What is the efficacy of it in its fruits and effects, with sundry other considerations of the like nature.

By a distinct prospect and admiration of these things, the soul may walk in this paradise of God, and gather here and there a heavenly flower, conveying unto it a sweet savour of the love of Christ. See Song of Solomon . 2: 2-4.

Moreover, be not content to have right notions of the love of Christ in your minds, unless you can attain a gracious taste of it in your hearts; no more than you would be to see a feast or banquet richly prepared, and partake of nothing of it unto your refreshment. It is of that nature that we may have a spiritual sensation of it in our minds; whence it is compared by the spouse to apples and flagons of wine. We may taste that the Lord is gracious; and if we find not a relish of it in our hearts, we shall not long retain the notion of it in our minds. Christ is the meat, the bread, the food of our souls. Nothing is in him of a higher spiritual nourishment than his love, which we should always desire.

In this love he is glorious; for it is such as no creatures, angels or men, could have the least conceptions of, before its manifestation by its effects; and, after its manifestation, it is in this world absolutely incomprehensible.

PART I • CHAPTER 6

The Glory of Christ in the Discharge of his Mediatorial Office

Secondly, As the Lord Christ was glorious in the assumption of his office, so was he also in its discharge.

An unseen glory accompanied him in all that he did, in all that he suffered. Unseen it was unto the eyes of the world, but not in His who alone can judge of it. Had men seen it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Yet to some of them it was made manifest. Hence they testified that, in the discharge of his office, they “*beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*,” John 1:14; and that when others could see neither “*form nor comeliness in him that he should be desired*,” Isa. 53: 2. And so it is at this day. I shall only make some few observations; first, on what he did in a way of obedience; and then on what he suffered in the discharge of his office so undertaken by him.

I. 1. What he did, what obedience he yielded unto the law of God in the discharge of his office (with respect whereunto he said, “*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is in my heart*”), it was all on his own free choice or election, and was resolved whereinto alone. It is our duty to endeavour after freedom, willingness, and cheerfulness in all our obedience. Obedience has its formal nature from our wills. So much as there is of our wills in what we do towards God, so much there is of obedience, and no more. Howbeit we are, antecedently unto all acts of our own wills, obliged unto all that is called obedience. From the very constitution of our natures we are necessarily subject unto the law of God. All that is left unto us is a voluntary compliance with unavoidable commands; with him it was not so. An act of his own will and choice preceded all obligation as unto obedience. He obeyed because he would, before because he ought. He said, “*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*,” before he was obliged to do that will. By his own choice, and that in an act of

infinite condescension and love, as we have showed, he was “made of a woman,” and thereby “*made under the law*.” In his divine person he was Lord of the law, – above it, – no more obnoxious unto its commands than its curse. Neither was he afterwards in himself, on his own account, unobnoxious unto its curse merely because he was innocent, but also because he was every way above the law itself, and all its force.

This was the original glory of his obedience. This wisdom, the grace, the love, the condescension that was in this choice, animated every act, every duty of his obedience, – rendering it amiable in the sight of God, and useful unto us. So, when he went to John to be baptised, he, who knew he had no need of it on his own account, would have declined the duty of administering that ordinance unto him; but he replied, “*Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*,” Matt. 3: 15. This I have undertaken willingly, of my own accord, without any need of it for myself, and therefore will discharge it. For him, who was Lord of all universally, thus to submit himself to universal obedience, carries along with it an evidence of glorious grace.

2. *This obedience, as unto the use and end of it, was not for himself, but for us.* We were obliged unto it, and could not perform it; – he was not obliged unto it any otherwise but by a free act of his own will, and did perform it. God gave him this honour, that he should obey for the whole church, – that by “*his obedience many should be made righteous*,” Rom. 5: 19. Herein, I say, did God give him honour and glory, that his obedience should stand in the stead of the perfect obedience of the church as unto justification.

3. *His obedience being absolutely universal, and absolutely perfect, was the great representative of the holiness of God in the law.* It was represented glorious when the ten words were written by the finger of God in tables of stone; it appears yet more eminently in the spiritual transcription of it in the hearts of believers: but absolutely and perfectly it is exemplified only in the holiness and obedience of Christ, which answered it unto the utmost. And this is no small part of his glory in obedience, that the holiness of God in the law was therein, and therein alone, in that one instance, as unto human nature, fully represented.

4. *He wrought out this obedience against all difficulties and oppositions.* For although he was absolutely free from that disorder which in us has invaded our whole natures, which internally renders all obedience difficult unto us, and perfect obedience impossible; yet as unto opposition from without, in temptations, sufferings, reproaches, contradictions, he met with more than we all. Hence is that glorious word, “*although he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered,*” Heb.5: 8. See our exposition of that place. But, –

5. *The glory of this obedience ariseth principally from the consideration of the person who thus yielded it unto God.* This was no other but the Son of God made man, – God and man in one person. He who was in heaven, above all, Lord of all, at the same time lived in the world in a condition of no reputation, and a course of the strictest obedience unto the whole law of God. He unto whom prayer was made, prayed himself night and day. He whom all the angels of heaven and all creatures worshipped, was continually conversant in all the duties of the worship of God. He who was over the house, diligently observed the lowliest office of the house. He that made all men, in whose hand they are all as clay in the hand of the potter, observed amongst them the strictest rules of justice, in giving unto every one his due; and of charity, in giving good things that were not so due. This is that which renders the obedience of Christ in the discharge of his office both mysterious and glorious.

II. *Again, the glory of Christ is proposed unto us in what he suffered in the discharge of the office which he had undertaken.* There belonged, indeed, unto his office, victory, success, and triumph with great glory, Isa. 63: 1-5; but there were sufferings also required of him antecedently thereunto: “*Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?*” But such were these sufferings of Christ, as that in our thoughts about them our minds quickly recoil in a sense of their insufficiency to conceive aright of them. Never any one launched into this ocean with his meditations, but he quickly found himself unable to fathom the depths of it; nor shall I here undertake an inquiry into them. I shall only point at this spring of glory, and leave it under a veil.

We might here look on him as under the weight of the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; taking on himself, and on his whole

soul, the utmost of evil that God had ever threatened to sin or sinners. We might look on him in his agony and bloody sweat, in his strong cries and supplications, when he was sorrowful unto the death, and began to be amazed, in apprehensions of the things that were coming on him, – of that dreadful trial which he was entering into. We might look upon him conflicting with all the powers of darkness, the rage and madness of men, suffering in his soul, his body, his name, his reputation, his goods, his life; some of these sufferings being immediate from God above, others from devils and wicked men, acting according to the determinate counsel of God. We might look on him praying, weeping, crying out, bleeding, dying, – in all things making his soul an offering for sin; so was he *“taken from prison, and from judgement: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off from the land of the living: for the transgression,”* says God, *“of my people was he smitten,”* Isa. 53: 8. But these things I shall not insist on in particular, but leave them under such a veil as may give us a prospect into them, so far as to fill our souls with holy admiration.

Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Who has known thy mind, or who has been thy counsellor? O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! What shall we say unto these things? That God spared not his only Son, but gave him up unto death, and all the evils included therein, for such poor, lost sinners as we were; – that for our sakes the eternal Son of God should submit himself unto all the evils that our natures are obnoxious unto, and that our sins had deserved, that we might be delivered! How glorious is the Lord Christ on this account, in the eyes of believers! When Adam had sinned, and thereby eternally, according unto the sanction of the law, ruined himself and all his posterity, he stood ashamed, afraid, trembling, as one ready to perish for ever, under the displeasure of God. Death was that which he had deserved, and immediate death was that which he looked for. In this state the Lord Christ in the promise comes unto him, and says, Poor creature! How woeful is thy condition! how deformed is thy appearance! What is become of the beauty, of the glory of that image of God wherein thou wast created? How hast thou taken on thee the monstrous shape and image of Satan? And yet thy present misery, thy entrance into dust and darkness, is no way to be

compared with what is to ensue. Eternal distress lies at the door. But yet look up once more, and behold me, that thou mayest have some glimpse of what is in the designs of infinite wisdom, love, and grace. Come forth from thy vain shelter, thy hiding-place I will put myself into thy condition. I will undergo and bear that burden of guilt and punishment which would sink thee eternally into the bottom of hell. I will pay that which I never took; and be made temporally a curse for thee, that thou mayest attain unto eternal blessedness. To the same purpose he speaks unto convinced sinners, in the invitation he gives them to come unto him.

Thus is the Lord Christ set forth in the Gospel, “*evidently crucified*” before our eyes, Gal. 3: 1, – namely, in the representation that is made of his glory, – in the sufferings he underwent for the discharge of the office he had undertaken. Let us, then, behold him as poor, despised, persecuted, reproached, reviled, hanged on a tree, – in all, labouring under a sense of the wrath of God due unto our sins. Unto this end are they recorded in the gospel, – read, preached, and presented unto us. But what can we see herein? – what glory is in these things? Are not these the things which all the world of Jews and gentiles stumbled and took offence at? – those wherein he was appointed to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence? Was it not esteemed a foolish thing, to look for help and deliverance by the miseries of another? – to look for life by his death? The apostle declares at large that such it was esteemed, 1 Cor. 1. So was it in the wisdom of the world. But even on the account of these things is he honourable, glorious, and precious in the sight of them that do believe, 1 Pet. 2: 6, 7. For even herein he was “*the power of God, and the wisdom of God,*” 1 Cor. 1: 24. And the apostle declares at large the grounds and reasons of the different thoughts and apprehensions of men concerning the cross and sufferings of Christ, 2 Cor. 4: 3-6.

PART I • CHAPTER 7

The Glory of Christ in his Exaltation after the Accomplishment of the Work of Mediation in this World

We may, in the next place, behold the glory of Christ, with respect unto his office, in the actings of God towards him which ensued on his discharge of it in this world, in his own exaltation.

These are the two heads whereunto all the prophecies and predictions concerning Jesus Christ under the Old Testament are referred, – namely, his sufferings, and the glory that ensued thereon, 1 Peter 1: 11. All the prophets testified beforehand “*of the Sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*” So when he himself opened the Scriptures unto his disciples, he gave them this as the sum of the doctrine contained in them, “*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*” Luke 24: 26. The one is frequently expressed elsewhere, Rom. 14: 9; Phil. 2: 5-9.

So much as we know of Christ, his sufferings, and his glory, so much do we understand of the Scripture, and no more.

These are the two heads of the mediation of Christ and his kingdom, and this is their order which they communicate unto the church, first sufferings, and then glory: “*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,*” 2 Tim. 2: 12. They do but deceive themselves who design any other method of these things. Some would reign here in this world; and we may say, with the apostle, “*Would you did reign, that we might reign with you.*” But the members of the mystical body must be conformed unto the Head. In him sufferings went before glory; and so they must in them. The order in the kingdom of Satan and the world is contrary hereunto. First the good things of this life, and then eternal misery, is the method of that kingdom, Luke 16: 25.

These are the two springs of the salvation of the church, – the two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, from

which all the golden oil, whereby the church is dedicated unto God and sanctified, does flow. This glory of Christ in his exaltation, which followed on his sufferings, is that which we now inquire into. And we shall state our apprehensions of it in the ensuing observations: –

1. This is peculiarly that glory which the Lord Christ prays that his disciples may be where he is to behold it. It is not solely so, as it is considered absolutely; but it is that wherein all the other parts of his glory are made manifest. It is the evidence, the pledge, the means of the manifestation of them all. As unto all the instances of his glory before insisted on, there was a veil drawn over them while he was in this world. Hence the most saw nothing of it, and the best saw it but obscurely. But in this glory that veil is taken off, whereby the whole glory of his person in itself and in the work of mediation is most illustriously manifested. When we shall immediately behold this glory, we shall see him as he is. This is that glory whereof the Father made grant unto him before the foundation of the world, and wherewith he was actually invested upon his ascension.

2. By this glory of Christ I do not understand the essential glory of his divine nature, or his being absolutely in his own person “over all, God blessed for ever;” but the manifestation of this glory in particular, after it had been veiled in this world under the “*form of a servant*,” belongs hereunto. The divine glory of Christ in his person belongs not unto his exaltation; but the manifestation of it does so. It was not given him by free donation; but the declaration of it unto the church of angels and men after his humiliation was so. He left it not while he was in this world; but the direct evidence and declaration of it he laid aside, until he was “*declared to be the Son of God with power*,” by the resurrection from the dead.

When the sun is under a total eclipse, it loses nothing of its native beauty, light, and glory. It is still the same that it was from the beginning, – a “*great light to rule the day*.” To us it appears as a dark, useless meteor; but when it comes by its course to free itself from the lunar interposition, unto its proper aspect towards us, it manifests again its native light and glory. So was it with the divine nature of Christ, as we have before declared. He veiled the glory of it by the interposition of the flesh, or the assumption of our nature to be his own; with this addition, that therein he took on him the “*form of a servant*,” of a person of ordinary and low degree. But this temporary

eclipse being past and over, it now shines forth in its infinite lustre and beauty, which belongs unto the present exaltation of his person. And when those who beheld him here as a poor, sorrowful, persecuted man, dying on the cross, came to see him in all the infinite, untreated glories of the divine nature, manifesting themselves in his person, it could not but fill their souls with transcendent joy and admiration. And this is one reason of his prayer for them while he was on the earth, that they might be where he is to behold his glory; for he knew what ineffable satisfaction it would be unto them for evermore.

3. *I do not understand absolutely the glorification of the human nature of Christ, – that very soul and body wherein he lived and died, suffered and rose again, – though that also be included herein.* This also were a subject meet for our contemplation, especially as it is the exemplar of that glory which he will bring all those unto who believe in him. But because at present we look somewhat farther, I shall observe only one or two things concerning it.

a) That very nature itself which he took on him in this world, is exalted into glory. Some under a pretence of great subtlety and accuracy, do deny that he has either flesh or blood in heaven; that is, as to the substance of them, however you may suppose that they are changed, purified, glorified. The great foundation of the church and all gospel faith, is, that *he was made Flesh*, that he did partake of flesh and blood, even as did the children. That he has forsaken that flesh and blood which he was made in the womb of the blessed Virgin, – wherein he lived and died, which he offered unto God in sacrifice, and wherein he rose from the dead, – is a Socinian fiction. What is the true nature of the glorification of the humanity of Christ, neither those who thus surmise, nor we, can perfectly comprehend. It does not yet appear what we ourselves shall be; much less is it evident unto us what he is, whom we shall be like. But that he is still in the same human nature wherein he was on the earth, that he has the same rational soul and the same body, is a fundamental article of the Christian faith.

b) This nature of the man Christ Jesus is filled with all the divine graces and perfections whereof a limited, created nature is capable. It is not deified, it is not made a god; – it does not in heaven coalesce

into one nature with the divine by a composition of them, – it has not any essential property of the Deity communicated unto it, so as subjectively to reside in it; – it is not made omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent; but it is exalted in a fulness of all Divine perfection ineffably above the glory of angels and men. It is incomprehensibly nearer God than they all, – hath communications from God, in glorious light, love, and power, ineffably above them all; but it is still a creature.

For the substance of this glory of the human nature of Christ, believers shall be made partakers of it; *for when we see him as he is, we shall be like him*; but as unto the degrees and measures of it, his glory is above all that we can be made partakers of. “*There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and one star differeth from another in glory*,” as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 15: 41. And if there be a difference in glory among the stars themselves as to some degrees of the same glory, how much more is there between the glory of the sun and that of any star whatever! Such is the difference that is, and will be unto eternity, between the human nature of Christ and what glorified believers do attain unto. But yet this is not that properly wherein the glory of Christ in his exaltation, after his humiliation and death, does consist. The things that belong unto it may be reduced unto the ensuing heads.

1. It consists in the exaltation of the human nature, as subsisting in the divine person, above the whole creation of God in power, dignity, authority, and rule, with all things that the wisdom of God has appointed to render the glory of it illustrious. I have so largely insisted on the explication and confirmation of this part of the present glory of Christ, in the exposition of Heb. 1: 2, 3, that I have nothing more to add thereunto.

2. It does so in the evidence given of the infinite love of God the Father unto him, and his delight in him, with the eternal approbation of his discharge of the office committed unto him. Hence he is said “*to sit at the right hand of God*,” or at “*the right hand of the majesty on high*.” That the glory and dignity of Christ in his exaltation is singular, the highest that can be given to a creature, incomprehensible; – that he is, with respect unto the discharge of his office, under the eternal approbation of God; – that, as so gloriously

exalted, he is proclaimed unto the whole creation, – are all contained in this expression.

3. To this is added the full manifestation of his own divine wisdom, love, and grace, in the work of mediation and redemption of the church. This glory is absolutely singular and peculiar unto him. Neither angels nor men have the least interest in it. Here, we see it *darkly as in a glass*; above, it shines forth in its brightness, to the eternal joy of them who behold him.

This is that glory which our Lord Jesus Christ in an especial manner prayed that his disciples might behold. This is that whereof we ought to endeavour a prospect by faith; – by faith, I say, and not by imagination. Vain and foolish men, having general notions of this glory of Christ, knowing nothing of the real nature of it, have endeavoured to represent it in pictures and images, with all that lustre and beauty which the art of painting, with the ornaments of gold and jewels, can give unto them. This is that representation of the present glory of Christ, which, being made and proposed unto the imagination and carnal affections of superstitious persons, carries such a show of devotion and veneration in the Papal Church. But they err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the eternal glory of the Son of God.

This is the sole foundation of all our meditations herein. The glory that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the real actual possession of in heaven can be no otherwise seen or apprehended in this world, but in the light of faith fixing itself on divine revelation. To behold this glory of Christ is not an act of fancy or imagination. It does not consist in framing unto ourselves the shape of a glorious person in heaven. But the steady exercise of faith on the revelation and description made of this glory of Christ in the Scripture, is the ground, rule, and measure, of all divine meditations thereon.

Hereon our duty it is to call ourselves to an account as unto our endeavour after a gracious view of this glory of Christ: – When did we steadily behold it? when had we such a view of it as wherein our souls have been satisfied and refreshed? It is declared and represented unto us as one of the chief pillars of our faith, as a help of our joy, as an object of our hope, as a ground of our consolation, – as our greatest encouragement unto obedience and suffering. Are our minds every day conversant with thoughts hereof? or do we think ourselves

not much concerned herein? Do we look upon it as that which is without us and above us, – that which we shall have time enough to consider when we come to heaven? So is it with many. They care neither where Christ is nor what he is, so that one way or other they may be saved by him. They hope, as they pretend, that they shall see him and his glory in heaven, – and that they suppose to be sufficient time; but in vain do they pretend a desire thereof, – in vain are their expectations of any such thing. They who endeavour not to behold the glory of Christ in this world, as has been often said, shall never behold him in glory hereafter unto their satisfaction; nor do they desire so to do, only they suppose it a part of that relief which they would have when they are gone out of this world. For what should beget such a desire in them? Nothing can do it but some view of it here by faith; which they despise, or totally neglect. Every pretence of a desire of heaven, and of the presence of Christ therein, that does not arise from, that is not resolved into, that expectation which we have of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, is mere fancy and imagination.

Our constant exercise in meditation on this glory of Christ will fill us with joy on his account; which is an effectual motive unto the duty itself. We are for the most part selfish, and look no farther than our own concernments. So we may be pardoned and saved by him, we care not much how it is with himself, but only presume it is well enough. We find not any concernment of our own therein. But this frame is directly opposite unto the genius of divine faith and love. For their principal actings consist preferring Christ above ourselves, and our concerns in him above all our own. Let this, then, stir ourselves up unto the contemplation of this glory. Who is it that is thus exalted over all? Who is thus encompassed with glory, majesty, and power? Who is it that sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, – all his enemies being made his footstool? Is it not he who in this world was poor, despised, persecuted, and slain, – all for our sakes? Is it not the same Jesus *who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us in his own blood*? So the apostle told the Jews that the same Jesus whom *“they slew and hanged on a tree, God had exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins,”* Acts 5: 30, 31. If we have any valuation of his love, if we have any concernment in what he has done and

suffered for the church, we cannot but rejoice in his present state and glory.

Let the world rage while it pleases; let it set itself with all its power and craft against everything of Christ that is in it, – which, whatever is by some otherwise pretended, proceeds from a hatred unto his person; let men make themselves drunk with the blood of his saints; we have this to oppose unto all their attempts, unto our support, namely, what he says of himself: *“Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death,”* Rev. 1: 17, 18.

Blessed Jesus! we can add nothing to thee, nothing to thy glory; but it is a joy of heart unto us that thou art what thou art, – that thou art so gloriously exalted at the right hand of God; and we do long more fully and clearly to behold that glory, according to thy prayer and promise.

PART I • CHAPTER 8

Representations of the Glory of Christ under the Old Testament

It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, “*beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he declared unto his disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself;*” Luke 24: 27. It is therefore manifest that Moses, and the Prophets, and all the Scriptures, do give testimony unto him and his glory. This is the line of life and light which runs through the whole Old Testament; without the conduct whereof we can understand nothing aright therein: and the neglect hereof is that which makes many as blind in reading the books of it as are the Jews, – the veil being upon their minds. It is faith alone, discovering the glory of Christ, that can remove that veil of darkness which covers the minds of men in reading the Old Testament, as the apostle declares, 2 Cor. 3: 14-16. I shall, therefore, consider briefly some of those ways and means whereby the glory of Christ was represented unto believers under the Old Testament.

1. *It was so in the institution of the beautiful worship of the law, with all the means of it.* Herein have they the advantage above all the splendid ceremonies that men can invent in the outward worship of God; they were designed and framed in Divine wisdom to represent the glory of Christ, in his person and his office. This nothing of human invention can do, or once pretend unto. Men cannot create mysteries, nor can give unto anything natural in itself a mystical signification. But so it was in the old divine institutions. What were the tabernacle and temple? What was the holy place with the utensil of it? What was the oracle, the ark, the cherubim, the mercy-seat, placed therein? What was the high priest in all his vestments and administrations? What were the sacrifices and annual sprinkling of blood in the most holy place? What was the whole system of their religious worship? Were they anything but representations of Christ in the glory of his person and his office? They were a shadow, and the

body represented by that shadow was Christ. If any would see how the Lord Christ was in particular foreshadowed and represented in them, he may peruse our exposition on the 9th chapter of the Epistle unto the Hebrews, where it is handled so at large as that I shall not here again insist upon it. The sum is, "*Moses was faithful in all the house of God, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken afterward,*" Heb. 3: 5. All that Moses did in the erection of the tabernacle, and the institution of all its services, was but to give an antecedent testimony by way of representation, unto the things of Christ that were afterward to be revealed. And that also was the substance of the ministry of the prophets, 1 Pet. 1: 11,12. The dark apprehensions of the glory of Christ, which by these means they obtained, were the life of the church of old.

2. It was represented in the mystical account which is given us of his communion with his church in love and grace. As this is intimated in many places of Scripture, so there is one entire book designed unto its declaration. This is the divine Song of Solomon, who was a type of Christ, and a penman of the Holy Ghost therein. A gracious record it is of the divine communications of Christ in love and grace unto his church, with their returns of love unto him, and delight in him. And then may a man judge himself to have somewhat profited in the experience of the mystery of a blessed intercourse and communion with Christ, when the expressions of them in that holy dialogue do give light and life unto his mind, and efficaciously communicate unto him an experience of their power. But because these things are little understood by many, the book itself is much neglected, if not despised; yea, to such impudence have some arrived, in foaming out their own shame, as that they have ridiculed the expressions of it. But we are foretold of such mockers in the last days, that should walk after their own ungodly lusts; they are not of our present consideration.

The former instance of the representations of the glory of Christ in their institutions of outward worship, with this record of the inward communion they had with Christ in grace, faith, and love, gives us the substance of that view which they had of his glory. What holy strains of delight and admiration, what raptures of joy, what solemn and divine complacency, what ardency of affection, and diligence in attendance unto the means of enjoying communion with him, this

discovery of the glory of Christ wrought in the souls of them that did believe, is emphatically expressed in that discourse. A few days, a few hours spent in the frame characterised in it, is a blessedness excelling all the treasures of the earth; and if we, whose revelations of the same glory do far exceed theirs, should be found to come short of them in ardency of affection unto Christ, and continual holy admiration of his excellencies, we shall one day be judged unworthy to have received them.

3. It was so represented and made known under the Old Testament, in his personal appearances on various occasions unto several eminent persons, leaders of the church in their generations.

This he did as a prelude to his incarnation. He was as yet God only; but appeared in the assumed shape of a man, to signify what he would be. He did not create a human nature, and unite it unto himself for such a season; only by his divine power he acted the shape of a man composed of what ethereal substance he pleased, immediately to be dissolved. So he appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, and others; as I have at large elsewhere proved and confirmed. And hereon, also, because he was the divine person who dwelt in and dwelt with the church, under the Old Testament, from first to last, in so doing he constantly assumes unto himself human affections, to intimate that a season would come when he would immediately act in that nature. And, indeed, after the fall there is nothing spoken of God in the Old Testament, nothing of his institutions, nothing of the way and manner of dealing with the church, but what has respect unto the future incarnation of Christ. And it had been absurd to bring in God under perpetual anthropopathies, as grieving, repenting, being angry, well pleased, and the like, were it not but that the divine person intended was to take on him the nature wherein such affections do dwell.

4. It was represented in prophetic visions. So the apostle affirms that the vision which Isaiah had of him was when he saw his glory, John 12: 41. And it was a blessed representation thereof; for his divine person being exalted on a throne of glory, “*his train filled the temple.*” The whole train of his glorious grace filled the temple of his body. This is the true tabernacle, which God pitched, and not man; – the temple which was destroyed, and which he raised again in three days, wherein dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, Col. 2:

9. This glory was now presented unto the view of Isaiah, chap. 6: 1-5; which filled him with dread and astonishment. But from thence he was relieved, by an act of the ministry of that glorious one, taking away his iniquity by a coal from the altar; which typified the purifying efficacy of his sacrifice. This was food for the souls of believers: in these and on the like occasions did the whole church lift up their voice in that holy cry, *“Make haste, our Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, on the mountains of spices.”*

Of the same nature was his glorious appearance on mount Sinai at the giving of the law, Exod. 19; – for the description thereof by the Psalmist, Ps. 68: 17, 18, is applied by the apostle unto the ascension of Christ after his resurrection, Eph. 4: 8. Only, as it was then full of outward terror, because of the giving of the fiery law, it was referred unto by the Psalmist as full of mercy, with respect unto his accomplishment of the same law. His giving of it was as death unto them concerned, because of its holiness, and the severity of the curse wherewith it was attended; his fulfilling of it was life, by the pardon and righteousness which issued from thence.

5. The doctrine of his incarnation, whereby he became the subject of all that glory which we inquire after, was revealed, although not so clearly as by the gospel, after the actual accomplishment of the thing itself. In how many places this is done in the Old Testament I have elsewhere declared; at least I have explained and vindicated many of them (for no man can presume to know them all), – *“Vindicae Evangelae”* [Owen’s written reply to a Socinian]. One instance, therefore, shall here suffice; and this is that of the same prophet Isaiah, chap. 9: 6, 7, *“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”* This one testimony is sufficient to confound all Jews, Socinians, and other enemies of the glory of Christ. I do acknowledge that, notwithstanding this declaration of the glory of Christ in his future incarnation and rule, there remained much darkness in the minds of them unto whom it was

then made. For although they might and did acquiesce in the truth of the revelation, yet they could frame to themselves no notions of the way or manner of its accomplishment. But now, when every word of it is explained, declared, and its mystical sense visibly laid open unto us in the Gospel, and by the accomplishment exactly answering every expression in it, it is judicial blindness not to receive it. Nothing but the satanical pride of the hearts of men, which will admit of no effects of infinite wisdom but what they suppose they can comprehend, can shut their eyes against the light of this truth

6. Promises, prophecies, predictions, concerning his person, his coming, his office, his kingdom, and his glory in them all, with the wisdom, grace, and love of God to the church in him, are the line of life, as was said, which runs through all the writings of the Old Testament, and takes up a great portion of them. Those were the things which he expounded unto his disciples out of Moses and all the Prophets. Concerning these things he appealed to the Scriptures against all his adversaries: “*Search the Scriptures; for they are they which testify of me.*” And if we find them not, if we discern them not therein, it is because a veil of blindness is over our minds. Nor can we read, study, or meditate on the writings of the Old Testament unto any advantage, unless we design to find out and behold the glory of Christ, declared and represented in them. For want hereof they are a sealed book to many unto this day.

7. It is usual in the Old Testament to set out the glory of Christ under metaphorical expressions; yea, it abounds therein. For such allusions are exceedingly suited to let in a sense into our minds of those things which we cannot distinctly comprehend. And there is an infinite condescension of divine wisdom in this way of instruction, representing unto us the power of things spiritual in what we naturally discern. Instances of this kind, in calling the Lord Christ by the names of those creatures which unto our senses represent that excellency which is spiritually in him, are innumerable. So he is called the rose, for the sweet savour of his love, grace, and obedience; – the lily, for his gracious beauty and amiableness; – the pearl of price, for his worth, for to them that believe he is precious; – the vine, for his fruitfulness; – the lion, for his power; – the Lamb, for his meekness and fitness for sacrifice; with other things of the like kind almost innumerable.

These things have I mentioned, not with any design to search into the depth of this treasury of those divine truths concerning the glory of Christ: but only to give a little light unto the words of the evangelist, that he opened unto his disciples out of Moses and all the Prophets the things which concerned himself; and to stir up our own souls unto a contemplation of them as contained therein.

PART I · CHAPTER 9

The Glory of Christ in his intimate Conjunction with the Church

What concerns the glory of Christ in the mission of the Holy Ghost unto the church, with all the divine truths that are branched from it, I have at large declared in my discourse concerning the whole dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Here, therefore, it must have no place amongst those many other things which offer themselves unto our contemplation as part of this glory, or intimately belonging thereunto. I shall insist briefly on three only, which cannot be reduced directly unto the former heads.

And the first of these is, – *That intimate conjunction that is between Christ and the church; whence it is just and equal in the sight of God, according unto the rules of his eternal righteousness*, that what he did and suffered in the discharge of his office, should be esteemed, reckoned, and imputed unto us, as unto all the fruits and benefits of it, as if we had done and suffered the same things ourselves. For this conjunction of his with us was an act of his own mind and will, wherein he is ineffably glorious.

The enemies of the glory of Christ and of his cross do take this for granted, that there ought to be such a conjunction between the guilty person and him that suffers for him, as that in him the guilty person may be said, in some sense, to undergo the punishment himself. But then they affirm, on the other hand, that there was no such conjunction between Christ and sinners, – none at all; but that he was a man, as they were men; and otherwise, that he was at the greatest distance from them all as it is possible for one man to be from another, *Socin. de Servant. lib. 3 cap. 3*. The falseness of this latter assertion, and the gross ignorance of the Scripture, under a pretence of subtlety, in them that make it, will evidently appear in our ensuing Discourse.

The apostle tells us, 1 Peter 2: 24, that in "*his own self he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;*" and, chap. 3: 18, that he "*suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*" But this seems somewhat strange unto reason. Where is the justice, where is the equity, that the just should suffer for the unjust? Where is divine righteousness herein? For it was an act of God: "*The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,*" Isa. 53: 6. The equity hereof, with the grounds of it, must be here a little inquired into. First of all, it is certain that all the elect, the whole church of God, fell in Adam under the curse due to the transgression of the law. It is so also, that in this curse death, both temporal and eternal, was contained. This curse none could undergo and be saved. Nor was it consistent with the righteousness, or holiness, or truth of God, that sin should go unpunished. Wherefore there was a necessity, upon a supposition of God's decree to save his church, of a *transfer of punishment*, – namely, from them who had deserved it, and could not bear it, unto one who had not deserved it, but could bear it.

A supposition of this transfer of punishment by divine dispensation is the foundation of Christian religion, yea, of all supernatural revelation contained in the Scripture. This was first intimated in the first promise; and afterward explained and confirmed in all the institutions of the Old Testament. For although in the sacrifices of the law, there was a revival of the greatest and most fundamental principle of the law of nature, – name]y, that God is to be worshipped with our best, – yet the principal end and use of them was to represent this transfer of punishment from the offender unto another, who was to be a sacrifice in his stead.

The reasons of the equity hereof, and the unspeakable glory of Christ herein, is what we now inquire into. And I shall reduce what ought to be spoken hereunto to the ensuing heads: –

I. It is not contrary unto the nature of divine justice, it does not interfere with the principles of natural light in man, that in sundry cases some persons should suffer punishment for the sins and, offences of others.

I shall at present give this assertion no other confirmation, but only that God has often done so, who will, who can, do no iniquity.

So he affirms that he will do, Exod. 20: 5, "*Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.*" It

is no exception of weight, that they also are sinners, continuing in their fathers' sins; for the worst of sinners must not be dealt unjustly withal: but they must be so if they are punished for their fathers' sins, and it be absolutely unlawful that any one should be punished for the sin of another.

So the church affirms, "*Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities,*" Lam. 5: 7. And so it was; for in the Babylonian captivity God punished the sins of their forefathers, especially those committed in the days of Manasseh, 2 Kings 23: 26, 27; as afterward, in the final destruction of that church and nation, God punished in them the guilt of all bloody persecutions from the beginning of the world, Luke 11: 50, 51.

So Canaan was cursed for the sin of his father, Gen. 9: 25. Saul's seven sons were put to death for their father's bloody cruelty, 2 Sam. 21:9, 14. For the sin of David, seventy thousand of the people were destroyed by an angel, concerning whom he said, "*It is I that have sinned and done evil; these sheep, what have they done*" 2 Sam. 24: 15-17. See also 1 Kings 21: 29. So was it with all the children or infants that perished in the flood, or in the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah. And other instances of the like nature may be assigned.

It is therefore evident that there is no inconsistency with the nature of divine justice, nor the rules of reason among men, that in sundry cases the sins of some may be punished on others.

II. It is to be observed, that this administration of justice is not promiscuous, – that any whatever may be punished for the sins of any others. There is always a special cause and reason of it; and this is a peculiar conjunction between them who sin and those who are punished for their sins. And two things belong unto this conjunction 1. Special relation; 2. Special mutual interest.

1. There is a special relation required unto this translation of punishment; such as that between parents and children, as in most of the instances before given; or between a king and subjects, as in the case of David. Hereby the persons sinning and those suffering are constituted one body, wherein if one member offend, another may justly suffer: the back may answer for what the hand takes away.

2. It consists in mutual interest. Those whose sins are punished in others have such an interest in them, as that their being so is a punishment unto themselves. Therefore are such sinners threatened

with the punishment and evils that shall befall their posterity or children for their sakes; which is highly penal unto themselves, Numb. 14: 33, “*Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms.*” The punishment due to their sins is in part transferred unto their children; and therein did the sting of their own punishment also consist.

III. There is a greater, a more intimate conjunction, a nearer relation, a higher mutual interest, between Christ and the church, than ever was or can be between any other persons or relations in the world, whereon it became just and equal in the sight of God that he should suffer for us, and that what he did and suffered would be imputed unto us; which is farther to be cleared.

There neither is nor can be any more than a threefold conjunction between divers distinct persons. The first is natural; the second is moral, whereunto I refer that which is spiritual or mystical; and the third federal, by virtue of mutual compact. In all thee ways is Christ in conjunction with his church, and in every one of them in a way singular and peculiar.

1. The first conjunction of distinct periods is natural. God has made all mankind “of one blood,” Acts 17: 26, – whereby there is a cognation and alliance between them all. Hence every man is every man’s brother or neighbour, unto whom loving-kindness is to be showed, Luke 10: 36. And this conjunction was between Christ and the church, as the apostle declares, Heb. 2: 14, 15, “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*” Hence “*both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one,*” verse 11. His infinite condescension, in coming into this communion and conjunction of nature with us, was before declared; but it is not common, like that between all other men, partakers of the same nature. There are two things wherein it was peculiar and eminent.

a) This conjunction between him and the church did not arise from a necessity of nature, but from a voluntary act of his will. The conjunction that is between all others is necessary. Every man is every man’s brother, Whether he will or no, by being a man. Natural

generation, communicating to every one his subsistence in the same nature, prevent all acts of their own will and choice. With the Lord Christ it was otherwise, as the text affirms. For such reasons as are there expressed, he did, by an act of his own will, partake of flesh and blood, or came into this conjunction with us. He did it of his own choice, because the children did partake of the same. He would be what the children were. Wherefore the conjunction of Christ in human nature with the church is ineffably distinct from that common conjunction which is amongst all others in the same nature. And, therefore, although it should not be meet amongst mere men, that one should act and suffer in the stead of others, because they are all thus related to one another, as it were, whether they will or no; yet this could not reach the Lord Christ, who, in a strange and wonderful manner, came into this conjunction by a mere act of his own.

b) He came into it on this design, and for this only end, – namely, that in our nature, taken to be his own, he might do and suffer what was to be done and suffered for the church: so it is added in the text, *“That by death he might destroy him who had the power of death; and deliver them who through fear of death were subject to bondage.”* This was the only end of his conjunction in nature with the church; and this puts the case between him and it at a vast distance from what is or may be between other men.

It is a foolish thing to argue, that because a mere participation of the same nature among men is not sufficient to warrant the righteousness of punishing one for another, – therefore the conjunction in the same nature between Christ and the church is not a sufficient and just foundation of his suffering for us, and in our stead. For, by an *act of his own will and choice*, he did partake of our nature, and that for this very end, that therein he might suffer for us; as the Holy Ghost expressly declares. Amongst others, there neither is nor can be any thing of this nature, and so no objection from what is equal or unequal among them can arise against what is equal between Christ and the church. And herein is he glorious and precious unto them that believe, as we shall see immediately.

2. There is a mystical conjunction between Christ and the church, which answers all the most strict, real, or moral unions or conjunctions between other persons or things. Such is the conjunction between the head of a body and its members, or the tree

of the vine and its branches, which are real; or between a husband and wife, which is moral and real also. That there is such a conjunction between Christ and his church the Scripture plentifully declares, as also that it is the foundation of the equity of his suffering in its stead. So speaks the apostle, Eph 5: 25-32, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,*" – that is, his wife, the bride, the Lamb's wife, – "*and gave himself for it,*" &c. Being the head and husband of the church, which was to be sanctified and saved, and could be so no otherwise but by his blood and sufferings, he was both suitable so to suffer, and it was righteous also that what he did and suffered should be imputed unto them for whom he both did it and suffered. Let the adversaries of the glory of Christ assign any one instance of such a conjunction, union, and relation between any amongst mankind, as is between Christ and the church, and they may give some countenance unto their cavils against his obedience and sufferings in our stead, with the imputation of what he did and suffered unto us. But the glory of Christ is singular herein, and as such it appears unto them by whom the mystery of it is, in any measure, spiritually apprehended.

But yet it will be said, that this mystical conjunction of Christ with his church is consequential unto what he did and suffered for it; for it ensues on the conversion of men unto him. For it is by faith that we are implanted into him. Until that be actually wrought in us, we have no mystical conjunction with him. He is not a head or a husband unto unregenerate, unsanctified unbelievers, while they continue so to be; and such was the state of the whole church when Christ suffered for us, Rom. 5: 8; Eph 2: 6. There was, therefore, no such mystical conjunction between him and the church as to render it suitable and equal that he should suffer in its stead. Wherefore the church is the effect of the work of redemption, – that which rose out of it, which was made and constituted by it; and cannot be so the object of it as that which was to be redeemed by virtue of an antecedent conjunction with it. I answer, –

a) ...although this mystical conjunction is not actually consummate without an actual participation of the Spirit of Christ, yet the church of the elect was designed antecedently unto all his sufferings to be his spouse and wife, so as that he might love her and suffer for her; so it is said, Hos. 12: 12, "*Israel served for a wife, and*

for a wife he kept sheep.” Howbeit she was not his married wife until after he had served for her, and thereby purchased her to be his wife; yet as he served for her she is called his wife, because of his love unto her, and because she was so designed to be, upon his service. So was the church designed to be the spouse of Christ in the counsel of God; whereon he loved her and gave himself for her.

Hence, in the work of redemption the church was the object of it, as designed to be the spouse of Christ; and the effect of it, inasmuch as that thereby it was made suitable for the full consummation of that alliance; as the apostle expressly declares, Eph. 5: 25-27.

b) Antecedently unto all that the Lord Christ did and suffered for the church, there was a supreme act of the will of God the Father, *giving all the elect unto him*, entrusting them with him, to be redeemed, sanctified, and saved; as himself declares, John 17: 6, 9; 10: 14-16. And on these grounds this mystical conjunction between Christ and the church has its virtue and efficacy before it be actually consummate.

3. *There is a federal conjunction between distinct persons: and as this is various, according unto the variety of the interests and ends of them that enter into it;* so that is most eminent, where one, by the common consent of all that are concerned, undertakes to be a sponsor or surety for others, to do and answer what on their part is required of them for attaining the ends of the covenant. So did the Lord Christ undertake to be surety of the new covenant on behalf of the church, Heb. 7: 22, and thereon offered himself unto God, to do and suffer for them, in their stead, and on their behalf, whatever was required, that they might be sanctified and saved. These things I have treated of at large elsewhere, as containing a great part of the mystery of the wisdom of God in the salvation of the church. Here, therefore, I do only observe, that this is that whereby the mystical conjunction that was between Christ and the church, whereon it was suitable, just, and equal in the sight of God, that what he did and suffered should be imputed unto us, is completed.

These are some of the foundations of that mystery of transmitting the sins of the church, as to the guilt and punishment of them, from the sinners themselves unto another, in every way innocent, pure, and righteous in himself, – which is the life, soul, and centre of all Scripture revelations. And herein is he exceedingly glorious and

precious unto them that believe. No heart can conceive, no tongue can express the glory of Christ herein. Now, because his infinite condescension and love herein have been spoken to before, I shall here only instance its greatness in some of its effects.

a) It shines forth in the exaltation of the righteousness of God in the forgiveness of sins. There is no more adequate conception of the divine nature, than that of justice in rule and government. Hereunto it belongs to punish sin according unto its desert; and herein consisted the first actings of God as the governor of the rational creation. They did so in the eternal punishment of the angels that sinned, and the casting of Adam out of Paradise, – an emblem also of everlasting ruin. Now, all the church, all the elect of God, are sinners; – they were so in Adam, – they have been and are so in themselves. What does become the justice of God to do thereon? Shall it dismiss then all unpunished? Where, then, is that justice which spared not the angels who sinned, nor Adam at the first? Would this procedure have any consonance thereunto, – be reconcilable unto it? Wherefore the establishment of the righteousness of God on the one hand, and the forgiveness of sin on the other, seem so contradictory, as that many stumble and fall at it eternally. See Rom. 10: 3, 4.

But in this interposition of Christ, in this translation of punishment from the church unto him, by virtue of his conjunction therewith, there is a blessed harmony between the righteousness of God and the forgiveness of sins; – the exemplification whereof is his eternal glory. “O blessed change! O sweet permutation!” as Justin Martyr speaks.

By virtue of his union with the church, which of his own accord he entered into, and his undertaking therein to answer for it in the sight of God, it was a righteous thing with God to *lay the punishment of all our sins upon him*, so as that he might freely and graciously pardon them all, to the honour and exaltation of his justice, as well as of his grace and mercy, Rom. 3: 24-26.

Herein is he glorious in the sight of God, angels, and men. In him there is at the same time, in the same divine acting, a glorious resplendence of justice and mercy; – of the one in punishing, of the other in pardoning. The appearing inconsistency between the righteousness of God and the salvation of sinners, wherewith the consciences of convinced persons are exercised and terrified, and

which is the rock on which most of them split themselves into eternal ruin, is herein removed and taken away. In his cross were divine holiness and vindictive justice exercised and manifested; and through his triumph, grace and mercy are exerted to the utmost. This is that glory which ravishes the hearts and satiates the souls of them that believe. For what can they desire more, what is farther needful unto the rest and composure of their souls, than at one view to behold God eternally well pleased in the declaration of his righteousness and the exercise of his mercy, in order unto their salvation? In due apprehensions hereof let my soul live; – in the faith hereof let me die, and let present admiration of this glory make way for the eternal enjoyment of it in its beauty and fulness.

b) He is glorious in that the law of God in its receptive part, or as to the obedience which it required, was perfectly fulfilled and accomplished. That it should be so, was absolutely necessary, from the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of him by whom it was given. For what could be more remote from those divine perfections, than to give a law which never was to be fulfilled in them unto whom it was given, and who were to have the advantages of it? This could not be done by us; but through the obedience of Christ, by virtue of this his mystical conjunction with the church, the law was so fulfilled in us by being fulfilled for us, as that the glory of God in the giving of it, and annexing eternal rewards unto it, is exceedingly exalted. See Rom. 8: 3, 4.

This is that glory of Christ whereof one view by faith will scatter all the fear, answer all the objections, and give relief against all the despondencies, of poor, tempted, doubting souls; and an anchor it will be unto all believers, which they may cast within the veil, to hold them firm and steadfast in all trials, storms, and temptations in life and death.

PART I · CHAPTER 10

The Glory of Christ in the communication of Himself unto Believers

Another instance of the glory of Christ, which we are to behold here by faith, and hope that we shall do so by sight hereafter, consists in the mysterious communication of himself, and all the benefits of his mediation, unto the souls of them that do believe, to their present happiness and future eternal blessedness.

Hereby he becomes theirs as they are his; which is the life, the glory, and consolation of the church, Song of Solomon . 6: 3; 2:16; 7:10, – he and all that he is being appropriated unto them, by virtue of their mystical union. There is, there must be, some ground, formal reason, and cause of this relation between Christ and the church, whereby he is theirs, and they are his; – he is in them, and they in him, so as it is not between him and other men in the world.

The apostle, speaking of this communication of Christ unto the church, and the union between them which does ensue thereon, affirms that it is “*a great mystery*,” for “*I speak*,” saith he, “*concerning Christ and the church*,” Eph 5: 32.

I shall very briefly inquire into the causes, ways, and means of this *mysterious communication*, whereby he is made to be ours, to be in us, to dwell with us, and all the benefits of his mediation to belong unto us. For, as was said, it is evident that he does not thus communicate himself unto all by natural necessity, as the sun gives light equally unto the whole world, – nor is he present with all by a ubiquity of his human nature, – nor, as some dream, by a diffusion of his rational soul into all, – nor does he become ours by a carnal eating of him in the sacrament; but this mystery proceeds from, and depends on, other reasons and causes, as we shall briefly declare.

But yet, before I proceed to declare the way and manner whereby Christ communicates himself unto the church, I must premise something of divine communications in general and their glory. And I

shall do this by touching a little on the harmony and correspondence that is between the old creation and the new.

1. All being, power, goodness, and wisdom, were originally essentially, infinitely in God. And in them, with the other perfections of his nature, consisted his essential glory.

2. The old creation was a communication of being and goodness by almighty power, directed by infinite wisdom, unto all things that were created for the manifestation of that glory. This was the first communication of God unto anything without himself; and it was exceeding glorious. See Ps. 19: 1; Rom. 1: 20. And it was a curious machine, pruned in the subordination and dependency of one thing on another; without which they could not subsist, nor have a continuance of their beings. All creatures below live on the earth and the products of it; the earth, for its whole production, depends on the sun and other heavenly bodies; as God declares, Hos. 2: 21, 22, “*I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*” God has given a subordination of things in a sequence of causes, whereon their subsistence does depend. Yet, –

3. In this mutual dependency on and supplies unto one another, they all depend on and are influenced from God himself, – the eternal fountain of being, power, and goodness “*He hears the heavens;*” and in the continuation of this order, by constant divine communication of being, goodness, and power, unto all things, God is no less glorified than in the first creation of them, Acts 14: 15- 17; 17: 24-29.

4. This glory of God is visible in the matter of it, and is obvious unto the reason of mankind; for from his works of creation and providence they may learn his eternal power and godhead, wherein he is essentially glorious.

5. But by this divine communication, God did not intend only to glorify himself in the essential properties of his nature, but his existence also in three persons, of Father, Son, and Spirit. For although the whole creation in its first framing, and in its perfection, was, and is, by an emanation of power and goodness from the divine nature, in the person of the Father, as he is the fountain of the Trinity, whence he is said peculiarly to be the Creator of all things; yet the

immediate operation in the creation was from the Son, the power and wisdom of the Father, John 1: 1-3; Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2. And as upon the first production of the mass of the creation, it was under the special care of the Spirit of God, to preserve and cherish it unto the production of all distinct sorts of creatures, Gen. 1: 2, – so in the continuance of the whole, there is a special operation of the same Spirit in all things. nothing can subsist one moment by virtue of the dependence which all things have on one another, without a continual emanation of power from him. See Ps. 104: 29, 30.

By these divine communications, in the production and preservation of the creature, does God manifest his glory, and by them alone in the way of nature he does so; and without them, although he would have been for ever essentially glorious, yet was it impossible that his glory should be known unto any but himself. Wherefore, on these divine communications does depend the whole manifestation of the glory of God. But this is far more eminent, though not in the outward effects of it so visible, in the new creation; as we shall see.

a) All goodness, grace, life, light, mercy, and power, which are the springs and causes of the new creation, are all originally in God, in the divine nature, and that infinitely and essentially. In them is God eternally or essentially glorious; and the whole design of the new creation was to manifest his glory in them, by external communications of them, and from them.

b) The first communication of and from these things is made unto Christ, as the Head of the church. For, in the first place, it pleased God that in him should all the fullness of these things dwell, so as that the whole new creation might consist in him, Col. 1: 17-19. And this was the first egress of divine wisdom for the manifestation of the glory of God in these holy properties of his nature. For, –

c) This communication was made unto him as a repository and treasury of all that goodness, grace, life, light, power, and mercy, which were necessary for the constitution and preservation of the new creation. They were to be laid up in him, to be hid in him, to dwell in him; and from him to be communicated unto the whole mystical body designed unto him, – that is, the church. And this is the first emanation of divine power and wisdom, for the manifestation of his glory in the new creation. This constitution of Christ as the head of it,

and the treasuring up in him all that was necessary for its production and preservation, wherein the church is chosen and preordained in him unto grace and glory, is the spring and fountain of divine glory, in the communications that ensue thereon.

d) This communication unto Christ is, (1.) Unto his person; and then, (2.) With respect unto his office. It is in the person of Christ that all fulness does originally dwell. On the assumption of human nature into personal union with the Son of God, all fulness dwells in him bodily, Col. 2: 9. And thereon receiving the Spirit in all fulness, and not by measure, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid in him, Col. 2: 3, and he was filled with the unsearchable riches of divine grace, Eph 3: 8-11. And the office of Christ is nothing but the way appointed in the wisdom of God for the communication of the treasures of grace which were communicated unto his person. This is the end of the whole office of Christ, in all the parts of it, as he is a priest, a prophet, and a king. They are, I say, nothing but the ways appointed by infinite wisdom for the communication of the grace laid up in his person unto the church. The transcendent glory hereof we have in some weak measure inquired into.

e) The decree of *election* prepared, if I may so say, the mass of the new creation. In the old creation, God first prepared and created the mass or matter of the whole; which afterward, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was formed into all the distinct beings whereof the whole creation was to consist, and animates according to their distinct kinds.

And in order unto the production and perfecting of the work of the new creation, God did from eternity, in the holy purpose of his will, prepare, and in design set apart unto himself, that portion of mankind whereof it was to consist. Hereby they were only the peculiar matter that was to be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, and the glorious fabric of the church erected out of it. What was said, it may be, of the natural body by the Psalmist, is true of the mystical body of Christ, which is principally intended, Ps. 139: 15, 16, "*My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*" The substance of the church, whereof it was to be formed, was under the eye of God, as proposed in the decree of

election; yet was it as such imperfect. It was not formed or shaped into members of the mystical body; but they were all written in the book of life. And in pursuance of the purpose of God, there they are by the Holy Spirit, in the whole course and continuance of time, in their several generations fashioned into the shape designed for them.

f) This, therefore, is herein the glorious order of divine communications. From the infinite, eternal spring of wisdom, grace, goodness and love, in the Father, – all the effects whereof unto this end were treasured up in the person and mediation of the Son, the Holy Spirit, unto whom the actual application of them is committed, communicates life, light, power, grace, and mercy, unto all that are designed parts of the new creation. Hereon does God glorify both the essential properties of his nature, – his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and grace, – as the only eternal spring of all these things, and also his ineffable glorious existence in three persons by the order of the communication of these things unto the church, which are originally from his nature. And herein is the glorious truth of the blessed Trinity, – which by some is opposed, by some neglected, by most looked on as that which is so much above them as that it does not belong unto them, – made precious unto them that believe, and becomes the foundation of their faith and hope. In a view of the glorious order of those divine communications, we are in a steady contemplation of the ineffable glory of the existence of the nature of God in the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

g) According unto this *divine order*, the elect in all ages are, by the Holy Spirit moving and acting on that mass of the new creation, formed and animated with spiritual life, light, grace, and power, unto the glory of God. They are not called accidentally, according unto the external occasions and causes of their convention unto God; but in every age, at his own time and season, the Holy Spirit communicates these things unto them in the order declared, unto the glory of God.

h) And in the same manner is the whole new creation preserved every day; – every moment there is vital power and strength, mercy and grace, communicated in this divine order to all believers in the world. There is a continual influence from the Fountain, from the Head, into all the members, whereby they all consist in him, are acted by him, who worketh in us *both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*. And the apostle declares that the whole constitution of

church order is suited, as an external instrument, to promote these divine communications unto all the members of the church itself, Eph 4: 13-15.

This in general is the order of divine communications, which is for the substance of it continued in heaven, and shall be so unto eternity; for God is, and ever will be, all, and in all. But at present it is invisible unto eyes of flesh, yea, the reason of men. Hence it is by the most despised; – they see no glory in it. But let us consider the prayer of the apostle, that it may be otherwise with us, Eph. 1: 16-23. For the revelation made of the glory of God in the old creation is exceeding inferior to that which he makes of himself in the new.

Having premised these things in general concerning the glory of divine communications, I shall proceed to declare, in particular, the grounds and way whereby the Lord Christ communicates himself and wherewithal all the benefits of his mediation, unto them that do believe, as it was before proposed.

We on our part are said herein to receive him, and that by faith, John 1: 12. Now, where he is received by us, he must be offered, given, granted, or communicated unto us. And this he is by some divine acts of the Father, and some of his own.

The foundation of the whole is laid in a sovereign act of the will, the pleasure, the grace of the Father. And this is the order and method of all divine operations in the way and work of grace. They originally proceed all from him; and having effected their ends, do return, rest, and centre in him again. See Eph. 1:4-6. Wherefore, that Christ is made ours, that he is communicated unto us, is originally from the free act, grant, and donation, of the Father, 1 Cor. 1: 30; Rom. 5: 15-17. And hereunto sundry things do concur. As, –

1. His eternal purpose, which he purposed in himself, to glorify his grace in all his elect, by this communication of Christ and the benefits of his mediation unto them; which the apostle declares at large, Eph.1.

2. His granting all the elect unto Christ, to be his own, so to do and suffer for them what was previously necessary unto the actual communication of himself unto them: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me,” John 17: 6. 3. The giving of the promise, or the constitution of the rule and law of the Gospel, whereby a participation of Christ, an interest in him and all that he is, is made over and

assured unto believers, John 1: 12; 1 John 1: 1-4. 4. An act of almighty power, working and creating faith in the souls of the elect, enabling them to receive Christ so exhibited and communicated unto them by the gospel, Eph 1: 19, 20; 2: 5-8.

These things, which I have but named, have an influence into the glory of Christ herein; for this communication of him unto the church is an effect of the eternal counsel, wisdom, grace, and power of the Father.

But they are the acts of *Christ himself* herein, which principally we inquire into, as those which manifest the glory of his wisdom, love, and condescension. And, –

a) He gives and communicates unto them *his Holy Spirit*; – the Holy Spirit as peculiarly his, as granted unto him of the Father, as inhabiting in him in all fulness. This Spirit – abiding originally as to his person, and immeasurably as unto his effects and operations, in himself – he gives unto all believers, to inhabit and abide in them also, John 14: 14-20; 1 Cor. 6: 17; Rom. 8: 9. Hence follows an ineffable union between him and them. For as in his incarnation he took our nature into personal union with his own; so herein he takes our persons into a mystical union with himself. Hereby he becomes ours, and we are his.

And herein he is unspeakably glorious. For this mystery of the inhabitation of the same Spirit in him as the head, and the church as his body, animating the whole, is a transcendent effect of divine wisdom. There is nothing of this nature in the whole creation besides, – no such union, no such mutual communication. The strictest unions and relations in nature are but shadows of it, Eph. 5: 25-32. Herein also is the Lord Christ precious unto them that do believe, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence unto the disobedient. This glorious, ineffable effect of his wisdom and grace; this rare, peculiar, singular way of the communication of himself unto the church, is by many despised. They know, it may be, some of them, what it is to be joined unto a harlot so as to become one flesh; but what it is to be joined unto the Lord so as to become one spirit, they know not. But this principle and spring of the spiritual life of the church, and of all vital, spiritual motions towards God and things heavenly, wherein and whereby “*our life is hid with Christ in God*,” is the glory, the exaltation, the honour, the security of the church, unto the praise of

the grace of God. The understanding of it in its causes, effects, operations, and privileges wherewith it is accompanied, is to be preferred above all the wisdom in and of the world.

b) He thus communicates himself unto us, by the *formation of a new nature*, his own nature, in us; so as that the very same spiritual nature is in him and in the church. Only, it is so with this difference, that in him it is in the absolute perfection of all those glorious graces wherein it does consist; in the church it is in various measures and degrees, according as he is pleased to communicate it. But the same divine nature it is that is in him and us; for, through the precious promises of the gospel, we are made partakers of his Divine nature. It is not enough for us that he has taken our nature to be his, unless he gives us also his nature to be ours; – that is, implants in our souls all those gracious qualifications, as unto the essence and substance of them, wherewith he himself in his human nature is endued. This is that new man, that new creature, that divine nature, that spirit which is born of the Spirit, that transformation into the image of Christ, that putting on of him, that worship of God whereunto in him we are created, that the Scripture so fully testifies unto, John 3: 6; Rom 6: 3-8; 2 Cor. 3: 18; 5: 17; Eph 4: 20-24; 2 Peter 1:4.

And that new heavenly nature which is thus formed in believers, as the first vital act of that union which is between Christ and them by the inhabitation of the same Spirit, is peculiarly his nature. For both is it so as it is in him the idea and the exemplar of it in us, – inasmuch as we are *predestinated to be conformed unto his image*, – and as it is wrought or produced in our souls by an emanation of power, virtue, and efficiency from him.

This is a most heavenly way of the communication of himself unto us, wherein of God “*he is made unto us wisdom and sanctification.*” Hereon he says of his church, “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;*” – I see myself, my own nature, in them; whence they are comely and desirable. Hereby he makes way to “*present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish.*” On this communication of Christ unto us, by the forming of his own nature in us, depends all the purity, the beauty, the holiness, the inward glory of the church. Hereby is it really, substantially, internally separated from the world, and distinguished from all others, who, in the outward

form of things, in the profession and duties of religion, seem to be the same with them. Hereby it becomes the first fruits of the creation unto God, bearing forth the renovation of his image in the world; – herein the Lord Christ is, and will be, glorious unto all eternity. I only mention these things, which deserve to be far more largely insisted on.

c) He does the same by that actual engraftment or implantation into himself which he gives us by faith, which is of his own operation. For hereon two things do ensue; – one by the grace or power, the other by the law or constitution, of the gospel; which have a great influence into this mystical communication of Christ unto the church.

And the *first* of these is, that hereby there is communicated unto us, and we do derive, supplies of spiritual life, preservation, motion, strength in grace, and perseverance from him continually.

Thine is that which himself so divinely teaches in the parable of the vine and its branches, John 15: 1-5. Hereby is there a continual communication from all his fullness of grace unto the whole church and all the members of it, unto all the ends and duties of spiritual life. They live, nevertheless not they, but Christ liveth in them; and the life which they lead in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God. And the other, – by virtue of the law and constitution of the Gospel, – is, that hereon his righteousness and all the fruits of his meditation are imputed unto us; the glory of which mystery the apostle unfolds, Rom. 3-5.

I might add hereunto the mutual indwelling that is between him and believers by love; for – the way of the communication of his love unto them being by *the shedding of it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*, and their returns of love unto him being wrought in them by an almighty efficiency of the same Spirit – there is that which is deeply mysterious and glorious in it. I might mention also the continuation of his discharge of all his offices towards us, whereon all our receptions from him, or all the benefits of his mediation whereof we are made partakers, do depend. But the few instances that have been given of the glory of Christ in this mysterious communication of himself unto his church may suffice to give us such a view of it as to fill our hearts with holy admiration and thanksgiving.

PART I · CHAPTER 11

The Glory of Christ in the Recapitulation of all things in Him

In the last place, the Lord Christ is peculiarly and eminently glorious in the recapitulation of all things in him, after they had been scattered and disordered by sin. This the apostle proposes as the most signal effect of divine wisdom, and the sovereign pleasure of God.

“He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in himself: that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him,” Eph 1: 8-10.

For the discovery of the mind of the Holy Ghost in these words, so far as I am at present concerned, – namely, as unto the representation of the glory of Christ in them, – various brief observations must be premised; and in them it will be necessary that we briefly declare the original of all these things in heaven and earth, their primitive order, the confusion that ensued thereon, with their restitution in Christ, and his glory thereby.

1. God alone has all being in him. Hence he gives himself that name, *“I AM,”* Exod. 3: 14. He was eternally All; when all things else that ever were, or now are, or shall be, were nothing. And when they are, they are no otherwise but as *“they are of him, and through him, and to him,”* Rom. 11: 36. Moreover, his being and goodness are the same. The goodness of God is the meekness of the Divine Being to be communicative of itself in its effects. Hence this is the first notion of the divine nature, – infinite being and goodness, in a nature intelligent and self-subsistent. So the apostle declares it, *“He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder,”* Heb. 11: 6.

2. In this state of infinite, eternal being and goodness, antecedent unto any act of wisdom or power without himself to give

existence unto other things, God was, and is, eternally in himself all that he will be, all that he can be, unto eternity. For where there is infinite being and infinite goodness, there is infinite blessedness and happiness, whereunto nothing can be added. God is always the same. That is his name, “**יהוה יהוה** - *attah hu*” – Ps. 102: 27, “*Thou art he*,” – always the same. All things that are, make no addition unto God, no change in his state. His blessedness, happiness, self-satisfaction, as well as all other his infinite perfections, were absolutely the same before the creation of any thing, while there was nothing but himself, as they are since he has made all things: for the blessedness of God consists in the ineffable mutual in being of the three holy persons in the same nature, with the immanent reciprocal acting of the Father and the Son in the eternal love and complacency of the Spirit. Hereunto nothing can be added, herein no change can be made by any external work or effect of power. Herein does God act in the perfect knowledge and perfect love of his own perfections, unto an infinite acquiescence therein, – which is the divine blessedness. This gives us the true notion of the divine nature antecedent unto the manifestation of it made by any outward effects: – infinite being and goodness, eternally blessed in the knowledge and enjoyment of itself by inconceivable, ineffable, internal acting, answering the manner of its subsistence, which is in three distinct persons.

3. *This being and goodness of God, by his own will and pleasure acting themselves in infinite wisdom and power, produced the creation of all things.* Herein he communicated a finite, limited dependent being and goodness unto other things without himself. For all being and goodness being, as was said, in him alone, it was necessary that the first outward work and effect of the divine nature must be the communication of being and goodness unto other things. Wherefore, as when he had given unto every thing its being out of nothing, by the word of his power, saying, Let them be, and they were; so it is said, that he looked on all that he had made, “*and, behold, they were exceeding good*,” Gen. 1: 31. Being and goodness must be the first outward effects of the divine nature, which, being wrought by infinite power and wisdom, do represent unto us the glory of God in the creation of all things. Infinite being in self-subsistence, which is necessary in the first cause and spring of all things, – infinite goodness to communicate the effect of this being unto that which was

not, – and infinite wisdom and power in that communication, – are gloriously manifested therein.

4. *In this state, all things that were made, depended immediately on God himself,* without the interposition of any other head of influence or rule. They had the continuance of their being and its preservation from the immediate acting of these properties of the divine nature whereby they were made; and their dependence on God was by virtue of that law, which was implanted on the principles and powers of their many natures by God himself.

5. *Thus “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”.* He provided himself of two distinct, rational families, that should depend on him according to a law of moral obedience, and thereby give glory to him; with two distinct habitations for them, cognate unto their nature and use, – heaven above, and the earth beneath. The earth he appointed for the habitation of man; which was every way suited unto the constitution of his nature, the preservation of his being, and the end of his creation in giving glory to God. Heaven he prepared for the habitation of the angels; which was suited unto the constitution of their nature, the preservation of their being, and the end of their creation, in giving glory to God. Wherefore, as man had power and dominion over all things here below, and was to use them all unto the glory of God, – by which means God received glory from them also, though in themselves brute and inanimate; so the angels had the like dominion over the celestial and ethereal bodies, wherewith God has fitted the place of their habitation, that through the contemplation and use of them God might have a revenue of glory and praise from them also. To suppose any other race of intellectual creatures, besides angels in heaven and men on earth, is not only without all countenance from any divine testimony, but it disturbs and disorders the whole representation of the glory of God made unto us in the Scripture, and the whole design of his wisdom and grace, as declared therein. Intellectual creatures not comprehended in that government of God and mystery of his wisdom in Christ which the Scripture reveals, are a chimera framed in the imaginations of some men, scarce duly sensible of what it is to be wise unto sobriety.

6. *This order of things was beautiful and comely.* Hence were they all said to be “exceeding good.” For each of these families had

their own immediate, distinct dependence on God. He was the immediate head of them. There was no other common head interposed between God and them. They were not a head unto one another. There were no communications unto them, but what were immediate from God himself. And their union among themselves was in this alone, that all their obedience did meet and centre in God. So God made the heavens and the earth, and two distinct families in them, for himself.

7. *This beautiful order in itself, this union between the two families of God, was disturbed, broken, dissolved by the entrance of sin;* for hereby part of the family above, and the whole family below, fell off from their dependence on God; and ceasing to centre in him as their head, they fell into variance and enmity among themselves. For the centre of this union and order being removed and lost, nothing but enmity and confusion remained among them. Hereon, to show that its goodness was lost, God cursed the earth and all that was in it; for it was put in subjection unto man, who was now fallen from him. Howbeit he cursed not the heavens, which were in subjection unto the angels, because some of them only left their habitation; and the habitation of the residue was not to be cursed for their sakes. But mankind was wholly gone off from God.

8. *The angels that sinned God utterly rejected for ever, as an example of his severity;* the whole race of mankind he would not utterly cast off, but determined to recover and save a remnant, according to the election of grace; which, how he did it in a way of condescension unto all his divine perfections, I have elsewhere declared.

9. *Howbeit, he would not restore them into their former estate, so as to have again two distinct families,* each in an immediate dependence on himself, though he left them in different and distinct habitations, Eph 3: 15; but he would *gather them both into one*, and that under a new head, in whom the one part should be preserved from sinning, and the other delivered from sin committed.

10. *This, then, is that which the apostle declares in these words,* “To gather together in one all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.” And so he again expresses it, Col. 1: 20, “To reconcile all things unto himself in him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” All things were fallen into disorder and

confusion by sin; they were fallen away from God into variance among themselves. God would not restore them into their first order, in an immediate dependence on his divine perfections. He would no longer keep them in two distinct families; but he would, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, gather them up into one common head, on whom they should have their immediate dependence, and be reconciled again among themselves.

11. *This new head, wherein God has gathered up all things in heaven and earth into one, one body, one family,* on whom is all their dependence, in whom they all now consist, is Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate. See 1 Cor. 11: 3; Eph 1: 22, 23. This glory was reserved for him; none other could be meet for it or worthy of it. See Col. 1: 17-19.

12. *To answer all the ends of this new Head of God 's recollected family,* all power in heaven and earth, all fulness of grace and glory, is committed unto him. There is no communication from God, no act of rule towards this family, no supply of virtue, power, grace, or goodness unto angels or men, but what is immediately from this new head whereinto they are gathered. In him they all consist, on him do they depend, unto him are they subject; in their relation unto him doth their peace, union, and agreement among themselves consist. This is the recapitulation of all things intended by the apostle.

13. *It is true that he acts distinctly and variously towards the two parts of the re-collected family of angels and men,* according as their different states and conditions do require. For, – 1. We had need of a reparation by redemption and grace, which the angels had not. 2. Angels were capable of immediate confirmation in glory, which we are not, until we come to heaven. Therefore, – 1. He assumed our nature that it might be repaired, which he did not [by] the nature of the angels 2. He gives us union unto himself by his Spirit, which exalts us into a dignity and honour meet for fellowship with them in the same family.

This is a brief account of the mysterious work of divine wisdom in the recapitulation of all things in Jesus Christ; and herein is he transcendently glorious, or his glory herein is far above our comprehension; yet some things may be observed, to direct us in the view and contemplation of it. As, –

a) He alone was a meet and capable subject of it. He alone could bear the weight of this glory. No mere creature in heaven or earth was meet to be thus made the head of the whole new creation of God. In none of them could all things consist. None of them was meet to be thus in the place of God, to have all things depend upon him, and be put in subjection unto him; so as that there should be no communication between God and the creation but by and through him alone. Wherefore, when the Holy Ghost assigns this glory unto him, he so describes him as that we may discern his singular meekness for it; as, that he is *“the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power,”* Heb. 1: 3; – that he is *“the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist,”* Col. 1: 15-17. Such a one alone, and no other, was meet to bear and uphold this glory. And the glory of his person is such, as that it is the blessedness of all creatures to centre in this glory of his office.

b) This is that glory which God designed unto his only Son incarnate, and it gives us a little view into the glory of that mystery, the wonderful eternal design of God to glorify himself in the incarnation of Christ. God would have his eternal, his only-begotten Son to be incarnate, to take our nature on him, – to be made man. What is his design in this incomprehensible work of his wisdom, love, and power? Indeed, in the first place, it was for the redemption of the church, by the sacrifice of himself, and other acts of his mediation. But there is that which is more general and comprehensive, and wherein all the concerns of the glory of God do centre. And this was, that he might *“gather all things into one”* in him; – that the whole creation, especially that which was to be eternally blessed, should have a new head given unto it, for its sustentation, preservation, order, honour, and safety. All springs are in him, and all streams are unto him, and in and by him unto God. Who can express the divine beauty, order, and harmony of all things that are in this, their recapitulation in Christ? The union and communion between angels and men, – the order of the whole family

in heaven and earth, – the communication of life, grace, power, mercy, and consolation to the church, – the rule and disposal of all things unto the glory of God, – do all depend hereon. This glory God designed unto his Son incarnate; and it was the greatest, the highest that could be communicated unto him. For, as the apostle observes, all things are put in subjection unto him, he only excepted who does so make them subject; that is, God the Father, 1 Cor. 15: 27.

There is no contemplation of the glory of Christ that ought more to affect the hearts of them that do believe with delight and joy, than this, of the recapitulation of all things in him. One view by faith of him in the place of God, as the supreme head of the whole creation. Moving, acting, guiding, and disposing of it, will bring in spiritual refreshment unto a believing refreshment unto a believing soul.

And it will do so the more, in that it gives a glorious representation of his divine nature also. For that any mere creature should thus be a head of life, motion, and power, as also of sovereign rule and disposal, of the whole new creation, with all things reduced into order thereby, is not only an impious, but a foolish imagination. Did we live more in the contemplation of this glory of Christ, and of the wisdom of God in this recapitulation of all things in him, there is not anything of our duty which it would not mind us of, nor anything of privilege which it would not give us a sense of, as might early be demonstrated.

c) In particular, the Lord Christ is glorious herein, in that the whole breach made on the glory of God in the creation, by the entrance of sin, is hereby repaired and made up. The beauty and order of the whole creation consisted in its dependence on God, by the obedience of the rational part of it, angels and men. Thereby were the being, the goodness, the wisdom, and power of God made manifest. But the beauty of this order was defaced, and the manifestation of the divine perfections unto the glory of God eclipsed, by the entrance of sin. But all is restored, repaired, and made up, in this recapitulation of all things in one new head, – Christ Jesus; yea, the whole curious frame of the divine creation is rendered more beautiful than it was before. Hence the whole of it groans for the interest of each part in this restoration of all things. Whatever there is of order, of beauty, of glory, in heaven above, or in earth beneath, it all arises from this new relation of the creation unto the Son of God. Whatever is not gathered

into one, even in him, in its place, and according to its measure, is under darkness, disorder, and the curse. Hence the Jews have a saying, that “in the days of the messiah all things shall be healed, but the serpent;” that is, the devil, and wicked men, which are as his seed.

d) He is glorious herein, in that he is appointed as the only means of exerting and expressing all the treasures of the infinite wisdom of God towards his creatures. The wisdom of God is absolutely, always, and in all things infinite. God does not, God cannot, act with more wisdom in one thing than in another; as in the creation of man, than in that of any inanimate creatures. In the first creation, infinite wisdom was the inseparable companion of infinite power: “*How marvellous are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all*”. But when the effects of this divine wisdom, in their principal beauty and glory, were defaced, greater treasures of wisdom were required unto their reparation. And in this recollection of all things in Christ, did God lay them forth unto the utmost of whatever he will do in dealing with his creatures. So the apostle expresses it, Eph 3: 10, “*To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*” By the recapitulation of all things into this one head, the manifold, various, unsearchable wisdom of God was made known unto the angels themselves. They knew not before of the design and work of God after the entrance of sin. These could not comprehend the wisdom that might repair that loss. They knew not that divine wisdom had another way to take herein; at least they knew not what way that should be. But hereby the manifold wisdom of God, his infinite wisdom in the treasures of it, able by various ways to attain the ends of his glory, was made known unto them. Herein namely, in the re-collection of all things in Christ – divine wisdom has made known and represented itself in all its stores and treasures unto angels and men. “*In him are hid,*” and by him are displayed, “*all the treasures of wisdom,*” Col. 2: 3. Herein is he glorious, and will be so to eternity.

e) He is glorious herein, in that hereby firmness and security is communicated unto the whole new creation. The first creation in its order was a curious and glorious fabric. But every thing depending immediately on God, by virtue of the principles of its own nature and the law of its obedience, all was brought unto a loss by the sin of angels and men. But now every thing that belongs unto this new

creation, even every believer in the world, as well as the angels in heaven, being gathered together in this one head, the whole and all, and every part and member of it, seen every particular believer, are secured from ruin, such as befell all things before. In this new Head they have an indissoluble consistency.

But *manum de tabula*. I shall insist on no more instances of this nature, which plentifully offer themselves in the Scripture unto us. For who can declare this glory of Christ? who can speak of these things as he ought? I am so far from designing to set forth the whole of it, that I am deeply sensible how little a portion I can comprehend of the least part of it. Nor can I attain unto any satisfaction in these Meditations, but what issues in an humble admiration.

PART I · CHAPTER 12

Differences between our Beholding the Glory of Christ by Faith in this World and by Sight in Heaven – The First of them Explained

“*We walk*” here “*by faith, and not by sight,*” 2 Cor. 5: 7; that is, in the life of God, in our walking before him, in the whole of our obedience therein, we are under the conduct and influence of faith, and not of sight. Those are the two spiritual powers of our souls; – by the one whereof we are made partakers of grace, holiness, and obedience in this life; and by the other, of eternal blessedness and glory.

Both these – namely, faith and sight, the one in this life, the other in that which is to come – have the same immediate object. For they are the abilities of the soul to go forth unto, and to embrace their object. Now, this object of them both is the glory of Christ, as has been declared, as also what that glory is, and wherein it does consist; wherefore my present design is to inquire into the difference that is between our beholding of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, and the vision which we shall have of the same glory hereafter.

The latter of these is peculiarly intended in that prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for his disciples, John 17: 24, “*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.*” But I shall not distinctly insist upon it, my design being another way, respecting principally the work of God in this life, and the privileges which we enjoy thereby. Yet I shall now take a short prospect of that also; not absolutely, but in the differences that are between faith and sight, or the view which we have of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, and that which they enjoy by vision who are above; – the object of them both being adequately the same.

But herein, also, I shall have respect only unto some of those things which concern our practice, or the present immediate exercise of faith. For I have elsewhere handled at large the state of the church above, or that of present glory, giving an account of the administration of the office of Christ in heaven, his presence among the glorified souls, and the adoration of God under his conduct. I have also declared the advantage which they have by being with him, and the prospect they have of his glory. Therefore these things must here be only touched on.

These differences may be referred unto two heads: – 1. Those which arise from the different natures and acting of those means and instruments whereby we apprehend this glory of Christ, – namely, faith and vision; and, 2. Those that arise from the different effects produced by them. Instances in each kind shall be given.

1. The view which we have of the glory of Christ by faith in this world is obscure, dark, unobvious, reflexive. So the apostle declares, 1 Cor. 13: 12, “Now we see through a glass darkly,” ■■■’ ■■■■■■■■■■ ■■ ■■■■■■■■■■ “di ’ esoptrou en aivigmati”; – “through” or by “a glass, in a riddle,” a parable, a dark saying. There is a double figurative limitation put upon our view of the glory of Christ, taken from the two ways of our perception of what we apprehend, – namely, the sight of things, and the hearing of words. The first is, that we have this view not directly, but reflexively and by way of a representation, as in a glass. For I take the glass here, not to be optical or a prospective, which helps the sight, but a speculum, or a glass which reflects an image of what we do behold. It is a sight like that which we have of a man in a glass, when we see not his person or substance, but an image or representation of them only, which is imperfect.

The shadow or image of this glory of Christ is drawn in the gospel, and therein we behold it as the likeness of a man represented unto us in a glass; and although it be obscure and imperfect in comparison of his own real, substantial glory, which is the object of vision in heaven, yet is it the only image and representation of himself which he has left, and given unto us in this world. That woeful, cursed invention of framing images of him out of stocks and stones, however adorned, or representations of him by the art of painting, are so far from presenting unto the minds of men any thing

of his real glory, that nothing can be more effectual to divert their thoughts and apprehensions from it. But by this figurative expression of seeing in a glass, the apostle declares the comparative imperfection of our present view of the glory of Christ.

But the allusion may be taken from an optic glass or mirror also, whereby the sight of the eye is helped in beholding things at a great distance. By the aid of such glasses, men will discover stars or heavenly lights, which, by reason of their distance from us, the eye of itself is no way able to discern. And those which we do see are more fully represented, though remote enough from being so perfectly. Such a glass is the gospel, without which we can make no discovery of Christ at all; but in the use of it we are far enough from beholding him in the just dimensions of his glory.

And he adds another intimation of this imperfection, in an allusion unto the way whereby things are proposed and conveyed unto the minds and apprehensions of men. Now this is by words. And these are either plain, proper, and direct, or dark, figurative, and parabolical. And this latter way makes the conception of things to be difficult and imperfect; and by reason of the imperfection of our view of the glory of Christ by faith in this world, the apostle says it is in ■■■■■■■■■■ “*ainigmati*”, in “*a riddle*.” These ■■■■■■■■■■ “*ainigmata*” the Psalmist calls ■■■■■■■■ “*chidot*”, “*dark sayings*,” Ps. 78: 2.

But here it must be observed, that the description and representation of the Lord Christ and his glory in the gospel is not absolutely or in itself either dark or obscure; yea, it is perspicuous, plain, and direct. Christ is therein evidently set forth crucified, exalted, glorified. But the apostle does not here discourse concerning the way or means of the revelation of it unto us, but of the means or instrument whereby we comprehend that revelation. This is our faith, which, as it is in us, being weak and imperfect, we comprehend the representation that is made unto us of the glory of Christ as men do the sense of a dark saying, a riddle, a parable; that is, imperfectly, and with difficulty.

On the account hereof we may say at present, how little a portion is it that we know of him! as Job speaks of God, chap. 26: 14. How imperfect are our conceptions of him! How weak are our minds in their management! There is no part of his glory that we can fully

comprehend. And what we do comprehend, – there is a comprehension in faith, Eph 3: 18, – we cannot abide in the steady contemplation of. For ever blessed be that sovereign grace, whence it is that He who “*commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ,*” and therein of the glory of Christ himself; – that he has so revealed him unto us, as that we may love him, admire him, and obey him: but constantly, steadily, and clearly to behold his glory in this life we are not able; “*for we walk by faith, and not by sight.*”

Hence our sight of him here is as it were by glances, – liable to be clouded by many interpositions. “*Behold, he standeth behind the wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing*” (■■■■■■■ “metzitz”, flourishing) “*himself through the lattice,*” Song of Solomon 2: 9. There is a great interposition between him and us, as a wall; and the means of the discovery of himself unto us, as through a window and lattice, include a great instability and imperfection in our view and apprehension of him. There is a wall between him and us, which yet he stands behind. Our present mortal state is this wall, which must be demolished before we can see him as he is. In the meantime he looks through the windows of the ordinances of the Gospel. He gives us sometimes, when he is pleased to stand in those windows, a view of himself; but it is imperfect, as is our sight of a man through a window. The appearances of him at these windows are full of refreshment unto the souls of them that do believe. But our view of them is imperfect, transient, and does not abide; – we are for the most part quickly left to bemoan what we have lost. And then our best is but to cry, “*the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before thee?*” When wilt thou again give me to see thee, though but as through the windows alas! what distress do we oftentimes sit down in, after these views of Christ and his glory! But he proceeds farther yet; and flourishes himself through the lattices. This displaying of the glory of Christ, called the flourishing of himself, is by the promises of the Gospel, as they are explained in the ministry of the Word. In them are represented unto us the desirable beauties and glories of Christ. How precious, how amiable is he, as represented in them! How are the souls of believers

ravished with the views of them! Yet is this discovery of him also but as through a lattice. We see him but by parts, – unsteadily and unevenly.

Such, I say, is the sight of the glory of Christ which we have in this world by faith. It is dark, – it is but in part. It is but weak, transient, imperfect, partial. It is but little that we can at any time discover of it; it is but a little while that we can abide in the contemplation of what we do discover. “*Rara hora, breves mora.*” [It is rare for an hour, a short delay] Sometimes it is unto us as the sun when it is under a cloud, – we cannot perceive it. When he hides his face, who then can behold him? As Job speaks, so may we, “*Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him: he hides himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him,*” chap. 23: 8, 9. Which way soever we turn ourselves, and what duties soever we apply ourselves unto, we can obtain no distinct view of his glory. Yet, on the other hand, it is sometimes as the sun when it shines in its brightness, and we cannot bear the rays of it. In infinite condescension he says unto his church, “*Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me,*” Song of Solomon 6: 6, – as if he could not bear that overcoming affectionate love, which looks through the eyes of the church in its acting of faith on him. Ah! how much more do we find our souls overcome with his love, when at any time he is pleased to make any clear discoveries of his glory unto us! Let us now, on the other hand, take a little consideration of that vision which we shall have of the same glory in heaven, that we may compare them together.

Vision, or the sight which we shall have of the glory of Christ in heaven, is immediate, direct, intuitive; and therefore steady, even, and constant and it is so on a double account: –

1. Of the object which shall be proposed unto us; 2. Of the visual power or faculty wherewith we shall be endued: from the imperfection of both which in this world arises the imperfection of our view of the glory of Christ by faith, as has been declared.

1. The object of it will be real and substantial. Christ himself, in his own person, with all his glory, shall be continually with us, before us, proposed unto us. We shall no longer have an image, a representation of him, such as is the delineation of his glory in the

Gospel. We “*shall see him*,” saith the apostle, “*face to face*,” 1 Cor. 13: 12; which he compares unto our seeing him darkly as in a glass, which is the utmost that faith can attain to. “*We shall see him as he is*”, 1 John 3: 2; – not as now, in an imperfect description of him. As a man sees his neighbour when they stand and converse together face to face, so shall we see the Lord Christ in his glory; and not as Moses, who had only a transient sight of some parts of the glory of God, when he caused it to pass by him.

There will be use herein of our bodily eyes, as shall be declared. For, as Job says, in our flesh shall we see our Redeemer, and our eyes shall behold him, chap. 19: 25-27. That corporeal sense shall not be restored unto us, and that glorified above what we can conceive, but for this great use of the eternal beholding of Christ and his glory. Unto whom is it not a matter of rejoicing, that with the same eyes wherewith they see the tokens and signs of him in the sacrament of the supper, they shall behold himself immediately in his own person? But principally, as we shall see immediately, this vision is intellectual. It is not, therefore, the mere human nature of Christ that is the object of it, but his divine person, as that nature subsists therein. What is that perfection which we shall have (for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part) in the comprehension of the hypostatical union, I understand not; but this I know, that in the immediate beholding of the person of Christ, we shall see a glory in it a thousand times above what here we can conceive. The excellencies of infinite wisdom, love, and power therein, will be continually before us. And all the glories of the person of Christ which we have before weakly and faintly inquired into, will be in our sight for evermore.

Hence the ground and cause of our blessedness is, that “*we shall ever be with the Lord*,” 1 Thess. 4: 17, – as himself prays, “*that we may be with him where he is, to behold his glory*.” Here we have some dark views of it, – we cannot perfectly behold it, until we are with him where he is. Thereon our sight of him will be direct, intuitive, and constant.

There is a glory, there will be so, subjectively in us in the beholding of this glory of Christ, which is at present incomprehensible. For *it does not yet appear what we ourselves shall be*, 1 John 3: 2. Who can declare what a glory it will be in us to

behold this glory of Christ? And how excellent, then, is that glory of Christ itself! This immediate sight of Christ is that which all the saints of God in this life do breathe and pant after. Hence are they willing to be dissolved, or “*desire to depart, that they may be with Christ,*” which is best for them, Phil. 1: 23. They choose “*to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord,*” 2 Cor. 5: 8; or that they may enjoy the inexpressibly longed-for sight of Christ in his glory. Those who do not so long for it, whose souls and minds are not frequently visited with earnest desires after it, unto whom the thoughts of it are not their relief in trouble, and their chiefest joy, are carnal, blind, and cannot see afar off. He that is truly spiritual entertains and refreshes himself with thoughts hereof continually.

2. It will be so from that visual power or faculty of beholding the glory of Christ which we shall then receive. Without this we cannot see him as he is. When he was transfigured in the mount, and had on his human nature some reflections of his divine glory, his disciples that were with him were rather amazed than refreshed by it, Matt. 17: 6. They saw his glory, but spake thereon “*they knew not what,*” Luke 9: 30-33. And the reason hereof was, because no man in this life can have a visual power, either spiritual or corporeal, directly and immediately to behold the real glory of Christ.

Should the Lord Jesus appear now to any of us in his majesty and glory, it would not be unto our edification nor consolation. For we are not fitted nor able, by the power of any light or grace that we have received, or can receive, to bear the immediate appearance and representation of them. His beloved apostle John had leaned on his bosom probably many a time in his life, in the intimate familiarities of love; but when he afterward appeared unto him in his glory, “*he fell at his feet as dead,*” Rev. 1: 17. And when he appeared unto Paul, all the account he could give thereof we, “*that he saw a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun;*” whereon he, and all that were with him, “*fell to the ground,*” Acts 26: 13, 14.

And this was one reason why, in the days of his ministry here on earth, his glory was veiled with the infirmities of the flesh, and all sorts of sufferings, as we have before related. The church in this life is no way fitted, by the grace which it can be made partaker of, to converse with him in the immediate manifestations of his glory.

And therefore those who dream of his personal reign on the earth before the day of judgement, unless they suppose that all the saints shall be perfectly glorified also (which is only to bring down heaven to the earth for awhile, to no purpose), provide not at all for the edification or consolation of the church. For no present grace, advanced unto the highest degree whereof in this world it is capable, can make us fit for an immediate converse with Christ in his unveiled glory.

How much more abominable is the folly of men, who would represent the Lord Christ in his present glory by pictures and images of him! When they have done their utmost with their burnished glass and gildings, an eye of flesh can not only behold it, but, if it be guided by reason, see it contemptible and foolish. But the true glory of Christ, neither inward nor outward sight can bear the rays of it in this life.

The dispensation which we are meet for is only that of his presence with us by his Spirit. We know him now no more after the flesh, 2 Cor. 5: 16. We are advanced above that way and means of the knowledge of him by the fleshly, carnal ordinances of the Old Testament. And we know him not according unto that bodily presence of his which his disciples enjoyed in the days of his flesh. We have attained somewhat above that also. For such was the nature of his ministry here on earth, that there could not be the promised dispensation of the Spirit until that was finished. Therefore he tells his disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go away, and send the Spirit to them, John 16: 7. Hereon they had a clearer view of the glory of Christ than they could have by beholding him in the flesh. This is our spiritual posture and condition. We are past the knowledge of him according to the flesh, – we cannot attain nor receive the sight of him in glory; but the life which we now lead is by the faith of the Son of God.

I shall not here inquire into the nature of this vision, or the power and ability which we shall have in heaven to behold the glory of Christ. Some few things may be mentioned, as it relates unto our minds, and our bodies also, after the resurrection.

a) For the mind, it shall be perfectly freed from all that darkness, unsteadiness, and other incapacities, which here it is accompanied

with; and whereby it is weakened, hindered, and obstructed, in the exercise of faith. And they are of two sorts.

(1.) Such as are the remainders of that depravation of our natures which came upon us by sin. Hereby our minds became wholly vain, dark, and corrupt, as the Scripture testifies, – utterly unable to discern spiritual things in a due manner. This is so far cured and removed in this life by grace, as that those who were darkness do become light in the Lord, or are enabled to live unto God under the conduct of a new spiritual light communicated unto them. But it is so cured and removed in part only, it is not perfectly abolished. Hence are all our remaining weaknesses and incapacities in discerning things spiritual and eternal, which we yet groan under, and long for deliverance from. No footsteps, no scars or marks that ever it had place in our minds shall abide in glory, Eph. 5: 27. Nothing shall weaken, disturb, or incapacitate our souls, enacting all their powers, unimpeded by vanity, diversions, weakness, inability, upon their proper objects. The excellency hereof, in universal liberty and power, we cannot here comprehend; nor can we yet conceive the glory and beauty of those mixed spiritual actings of our minds which shall have no clog upon them, no encumbrance in them, no alloy of dross accompanying them. One pure act of spiritual sight in discerning the glory of Christ, – one pure act of love in cleaving unto God, – will bring in more blessedness and satisfaction into our minds than in this world we are capable of.

(2.) There is an incapacity in our minds, as unto their acting on things spiritual and eternal, that is merely natural, from the posture wherein they are, and the figure which they are to make in this life. For they are here clothed with flesh, and in that debased and corrupted. Now, in this state, though the mind act its conceptions by the body as its organ and instrument, yet is it variously distressed, encumbered, and impeded in the exercise of its native powers, especially towards things heavenly, by this prison of the flesh, wherein it is confined. There is an angelical excellency in the pure acting of the soul when delivered from all material instruments of them, or when they are all glorified and made suitable helps in its utmost spiritual activity. How and by what degrees our minds shall be freed from these obstructions in their beholding the glory of Christ shall be afterward declared.

2. Again, a new light, the light of glory, shall be implanted in them. There is a light in nature, which is the power of a man to discern the things of man; – an ability to know, perceive, and judge of things natural. It is that “*spirit of a man*” which “*is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly,*” Prov. 20: 27.

But by the light hereof no man can discern spiritual things in a due manner, as the apostle declares, 1 Cor. 2: 11-16. Wherefore God gives a superior, a supernatural light, the light of faith and grace, unto them whom he effectually calls unto the knowledge of himself by Jesus Christ. He shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his dear Son. Howbeit this new light does not abolish, blot out, or render useless, the other light of nature, as the sun, when it rises, extinguishes the light of the stars; but it directs it and rectifies it as unto its principle, object, and end. Yet is it in itself a light quite of another nature. But he who has only the former light can understand nothing of it, because he has no taste or experience of its power and operations. He may talk of it, and make inquiries about it, but he knows it not.

Now, we have received this light of faith and grace, whereby we discern spiritual things, and behold the glory of Christ in the imperfect manner before described. But in heaven there shall be a superadded light of glory, which shall make the mind itself “*shine as the firmament,*” Dan. 12: 3. I shall only say three things of it.

a). That as the light of grace does not destroy or abolish the light of nature, but rectify and improve it, so the light of glory shall not abolish or destroy this light of faith and grace, but, by incorporating with it, render it absolutely perfect.

b) That as by the light of nature we cannot clearly comprehend the true nature and efficacy of the light of grace, because it is of another kind, and is seen only in its own light; so by the light of grace we cannot absolutely comprehend this light of glory, being of a peculiar kind and nature, seen perfectly only by its own light. It does not appear what we shall be.

c) That this is the best notion we can have of this light of glory, – that, in the first instance of its operation, it perfectly transforms the soul into the image and likeness of Christ.

This is the progress of our nature unto its rest and blessedness. The principles remaining in it concerning good and evil, with its

practical convictions, are not destroyed but improved by grace; as its blindness, darkness, and enmity to God are in part taken away. Being renewed by grace, what it receives here of spiritual life and light shall never be destroyed, but be perfected in glory. Grace renews nature; glory perfects grace; and so the whole soul is brought unto its rest in God. We have an image of it in the blind man whom our Saviour cured, Mark 8: 22-25. He was absolutely blind, – born so, no doubt. Upon the first touch, his eyes were opened, and he saw, but very obscurely; – he saw men walking like trees. But on the second, he saw all things clearly. Our minds in themselves are absolutely blind. The first visitation of them by grace gives them a sight of things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal; but it is obscure and unsteady. The sight of glory makes all things clear and evident.

3. *The body as glorified, with its senses, shall have its use and peace herein.* After we are clothed again with our flesh, we shall see our Redeemer with our eyes. We know not here what power and spirituality there will be in the acts of our glorified bodies. Such they will be as shall bear a part in eternal blessedness. Holy Stephen, the first martyr, took up somewhat of glory by anticipation before he died. For when he was brought to his trial before the council, all that sat therein, “*looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as the face of an angel,*” Acts 6: 16. He had his transfiguration, escorting unto his measure, answerable unto that of our blessed Saviour in the mount. And by this initial beam of glory he received such a piercing vivacity and edge on his bodily eyes, that through all those inconceivable distances between the earth and the residence of the blessed, he looked steadfastly into heaven, and “*saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,*” Acts 7: 55, 56. Who, then, can declare what will be the power and acting of this sense of sight when perfectly glorified; or what sweetness and refreshment may be admitted into our souls thereby? It was a privilege (who would not have longed to partake of it?) to have seen Him with our bodily eyes in the days of his flesh, as did the apostles and his other disciples. Howbeit he was not then glorified himself in the manifestation of his glory; nor they who saw him, in the change or transformation of their nature. How great this privilege was, himself declares unto those that so saw him, Matt. 13: 17, “*Verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see;*”

whereunto we shall speak immediately. And if this were so excellent a privilege as that we cannot but congratulate them by whom it was enjoyed, how excellent, how glorious will it be, when with these eyes of ours, gloriously purified and strengthened beyond those of Stephen, we shall behold Christ himself immediately in the fulness of his glory! He alone perfectly understands the greatness and excellency hereof, who prayed his Father that those who *“believe in him may be where he is, so to behold his glory.”*

These are some of the grounds of this first difference between our beholding the glory of Christ by faith here, and by immediate vision hereafter. Hence the one is weak, imperfect, obscure, reflexive; the other direct, immediate, even, and constant; – and we may stay a little in the contemplation of these things.

This view of the glory of Christ which we have now spoken unto is that which we are breathing and panting after; that which the Lord Christ prays that we may arrive unto; that which the apostle testifies to be our best; – the best thing or state which our nature is capable of, – that which brings eternal rest and satisfaction unto our souls.

Here our souls are burdened with innumerable infirmities, and our faith is clogged in its operations by ignorance and darkness. This makes our best estate and highest attainments to be accompanied with groans for deliverance: *“We which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,”* Rom. 8: 23. Yea, while we are in this tabernacle, we groan earnestly, as being burdened, because we are not *“absent from the body, and present with the Lord,”* 2 Cor. 5: 2, 4, 8. The more we grow in faith and spiritual light, the more sensible are we of our present burdens, and the more vehemently do we groan for deliverance into the perfect liberty of the sons of God. This is the posture of their minds who have received the first fruit of the Spirit in the most eminent degree. The nearer any one is to heaven, the more earnestly he desires to be there, because Christ is there. For the more frequent and steady are our views of him by faith, the more do we long and groan for the removal of all obstructions and interpositions in our so doing. Now groaning is [the expression of] a vehement desire, mixed with sorrow, for the present want of what is desired. The desire has sorrow, and that sorrow has joy and refreshment in it; – like a shower that falls on a man in a garden in the

spring; it wets him, but withal refreshes him with the savour it causes in the flowers and herbs of the garden where he is, and this groaning, which, when it is constant and habitual, is one of the choicest effects of faith in this life, respects what we would be delivered from, and what we would attain unto. The first is expressed, Rom. 7: 24, the other in the places now mentioned. And this triune, with an intermixture of some sighs from weariness by the troubles, sorrows, pains, sicknesses of this life, is the best we can here attain unto.

Alas! we cannot here think of Christ, but we are quickly ashamed of, and troubled at, our own thoughts; so confused are they, so unsteady, so imperfect. Commonly they issue in a groan or a sigh: Oh! when shall we come unto him? when shall we be ever with him? when shall we see him as he is? And if at any time he begins to give more than ordinary evidences and intimations of his glory and love unto our souls, we are not able to bear them, so as to give them any abiding residence in our minds. But ordinarily this trouble and groaning is amongst our best attainments in this world, – a trouble which, I pray God, I may never be delivered from, until deliverance do come at once from this state of mortality; yea, the good Lord increase this trouble more and more in all that believe.

The heart of a believer affected with the glory of Christ, is like the needle touched with the loadstone. It can no longer be quiet, no longer be satisfied in a distance from him. It is put into a continual motion towards him. This motion, indeed, is weak and tremulous. Pantings, breathing, sighings, groanings in prayer, in meditations, in the secret recesses of our minds, are the life of it. However, it is continually pressing towards him. But it obtains not its point, it comes not to its centre and rest, in this world.

But now above, all things are clear and serene, all plain and evident in our beholding the glory of Christ, – we shall be ever with him, and see him as he is. This is heaven, this is blessedness, this is eternal rest.

The person of Christ in all his glory shall be continually before us; and the eyes of our understandings shall be so gloriously illuminated, as that we shall be able steadily to behold and comprehend that glory.

But, alas! here at present our minds recoil, our meditations fail, our hearts are overcome, our thoughts confused, and our eyes turn

aside from the lustre of this glory; nor can we abide in the contemplation of it. But there, an immediate, constant view of it, will bring in everlasting refreshment and joy unto our whole souls.

This beholding of the glory of Christ given him by his Father, is, indeed, subordinate unto the ultimate vision of the essence of God. What that is we cannot well conceive; only we know that the "*pure in heart shall see God.*" But it has such an immediate connection with it, and subordination unto it, as that without it we can never behold the face of God as the objective blessedness of our souls. For he is, and shall be to eternity, the only means of communication between God and the church.

And we may take some direction in our looking into and longing after this perfect view of the glory of Christ, from the example of the saints under the Old Testament. The sight which they had of the glory of Christ – for they also saw his glory through the obscurity of its revelation, and its being veiled with types and shadows – was weak and imperfect in the most illuminated believers; much inferior unto what we now have by faith, through the Gospels. Yet such it was as encouraged them to inquire and search diligently into what was revealed, 1 Peter 1: 10, 11. Howbeit, their discoveries were but dark and confused, such as men have of things at a great distance, or “*in a land that is very far off*,” as the prophet speaks, Isa. 33: 17. And the continuance of this veil on the revelation of the glory of Christ, while a veil of ignorance and blindness was upon their hearts and minds, proved the ruin of that church in its apostasy, as the apostle declares, 2 Cor. 3: 7, 13, 14. This double veil (the covering covered, the veil veiled) God promised to take away, Isa. 25: 7; and then shall they turn to the Lord, when they shall be able clearly to behold the glory of Christ, 2 Cor. 3: 16.

But this caused those who were real believers among them to desire, long, and pray for, the removal of these veils, the departure of those shadows, which made it as night unto them in comparison of what they knew would appear, when “*the Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings.*” They thought it long ere “*the day did break, and the shadows flee away,*” Song of Solomon 2: 17; 4: 6. There was an ■■■■■■■■■■■■ “apokaradokia”, as the apostle speaks, Rom. 8: 19, – a thrusting forth of the head with desire and expectation of the exhibition of the Son of God in the flesh, and the

accomplishment of all divine promises therein. Hence he was called the Lord whom they sought and delighted in, Mal. 3: 1.

And great was the spiritual wisdom of believers in those days. They rejoiced and gloried in the ordinances of divine worship which they did enjoy. They looked on them as their chiefest privilege, and attended unto them with diligence, as an effect of divine wisdom and love, as also because they had a shadow of good things to come. But yet, at the same time, they longed and desired that the time of reformation were come, wherein these should all be removed; that so they might behold and enjoy the good things signified by them. And those who did not so, but rested in and trusted unto their present institutions, were not accepted with God. Those who were really illuminated did not so, but lived in constant desires after the revelation of the whole mystery of the wisdom of God in Christ; as did the angels themselves, 1 Peter 1: 3; Eph. 3: 9, 10.

In this frame of heart and suitable actings of their souls there was more of the power of true faith and love than is found among the most at this day. They saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, Heb. 11: 13. They reached out the arms of their most intent affections to embrace the things that were promised. We have an instance of this frame in old Simon, who, so soon as he had taken the child Jesus in his arms, cried out, "*Now, Lord, let me depart,*" now let me die; this is that which my soul has longed for, Luke 2: 28, 29.

Our present darkness and weakness in beholding the glory of Christ, is not like theirs. It is not occasioned by a veil of types and shadows, cast on it by the representative institutions of it, – it does not arise from the want of a clear doctrinal revelation of the person and office of Christ; but, as was before declared, it proceeds from two other causes. *First*, From the nature of faith itself, in comparison with vision. It is not able to look directly into this excellent glory, nor fully to comprehend it. *Secondly*, From the way of its proposal which is not the substance of the thing itself, but only of an image of it, as in a glass. But the sight, the view of the glory of Christ, which we shall have in heaven, is much more above that which we now enjoy by the gospel, as what we do or may so enjoy is above what they have attained under their types and shadows. There is a far greater distance between the vision of heaven and the sight which we have now by

faith, than there is between the sight which we now have and what they had under the Old Testament. Heaven does more excel the Gospel state than the Gospel state does the Law. Wherefore, if they did so pray, so long for, so desire the removal of their shadows and veils, that they might see what we now see, that they might so behold the glory of Christ as we may behold it in the light of the gospel; how much more should we, if we have the same faith with them, the same love (which neither will nor can be satisfied without perfect fruition), long and pray for the removal of all weakness, of all darkness and interposition, that we may come unto that immediate beholding of his glory which he so earnestly prayed that we might be brought unto!

To sum up briefly what has been spoken: There are three things to be considered concerning the glory of Christ, three degrees in its manifestation, – the shadow, the perfect image, and the substance itself. Those under the Law had only the shadow of it, and of the things that belong unto it; – they had not the perfect image of them, Heb. 10: 1. Under the gospel we have the perfect image, which they had not; or a clever, complete revelation and declaration of it, presenting it unto us as in a glass: but the enjoyment of these things in their substance is reserved for heaven; we must be “*where he is, that we may behold his glory.*” Now, there is a greater difference and distance between the real substance of any thing and the most perfect image of it, than there is between the most perfect image and the lowest shadow of the same thing. If, then, they longed to be freed from their state of types and shadows, to enjoy the representation of the glory of Christ in that image of it which is given us in the gospel; much more ought we to breathe and pant after our deliverance from beholding it in the image of it, that we may enjoy the substance itself. For, whatever can be manifest of Christ on this side heaven, it is granted unto us for this end, that we may the more fervently desire to be present with him.

And as it was their wisdom and their grace to rejoice in the light they had, and in those typical administrations of divine worship which shadowed out the glory of Christ unto them, yet did they always pant after that more excellent light and full discovery of it which was to be made by the Gospel; so it will be ours also thankfully to use and improve the revelations which we enjoy of it, and those institutions of worship wherein our faith is assisted in the view

thereof, – yet so as continually to breathe after that perfect, that glorifying sight of it which is reserved for heaven above.

And may we not a little examine ourselves by these things? Do we esteem this pressing towards the perfect view of the glory of Christ to be our duty? and do we abide in the performance of it? If it be otherwise with any of us, it is a signal evidence that our profession is hypocritical. If Christ be in us, he is the hope of glory in us; and where that hope is, it will be active in desires of the things hoped for. Many love the world too well, and have their minds too much filled with the things of it, to entertain desires of speeding through it unto a state wherein they may behold the glory of Christ. They are at home, and are unwilling to be absent from the body, though to be present with the Lord. They hope, it may be, that such a season will come at one time or another, and then it will be the best they can look for when they can be here no more. But they have but a little sight of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, if any at all, who so little, so faintly desire to have the immediate sight of it above. I cannot understand how any man can walk with God as he ought, or has that love for Jesus Christ which true faith will produce, or does place his refreshments and joy in spiritual things, in things above, that does not on all just occasions so meditate on the glory of Christ in heaven as to long for an admittance into the immediate sight of it.

Our lord Jesus Christ alone perfectly understood wherein the eternal blessedness of them that believe in him does consist. And this is the sum of what he prays for with respect unto that end, – namely, that we may be where he is, to behold his glory. And is it not our duty to live in a continual desire of that which he prayed so earnestly that we might attain? If in ourselves we as yet apprehend but little of the glory, the excellency, the blessedness of it, yet ought we to repose that confidence in the wisdom and love of Christ, that it is our best, – infinitely better than any thing we can enjoy here below.

Unto those who are accustomed unto these contemplations, they are the salt of their lives, whereby every thing is condited and made savoury unto them, as we shall show afterward. And the want of spiritual diligence herein is that which has brought forth a negligent, careless, worldly profession of religion, which, countenancing itself with some outward duties, has lost out of it the power of faith and love in their principal operations. Hereby many deceive their own

souls. Goods, lands, possessions, relations, trades, with secular interests in them, are the things whose image is drawn on their minds, and whose characters are written on their foreheads, as the titles whereby they may be known. As believers, beholding the glory of Christ in the blessed glass of the gospel, are changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord; so these persons, beholding the beauty of the world and the things that are in it in the cursed glass of self-love, are in their minds changed into the same image. Hence perplexing fears, vain hopes, empty embraces of perishing things, fruitless desires, earthly, carnal designs, cursed, self-pleasing imaginations, feeding on, and being fed by, the love of the world and self, do abide and prevail in them. But we have not so learned Christ Jesus.

PART I · CHAPTER 13

The Second Difference between our Beholding the Glory of Christ by Faith in this World and by Sight in Heaven

Faith is the light wherein we behold the glory of Christ in this world. And this in its own nature, as unto this great end, is weak and imperfect, like weak eyes, that cannot behold the sun in its beauty. Hence our sight of it differs greatly from what we shall enjoy in glory, as has been declared. But this is not all; it is frequently hindered and interrupted in its operations, or it loses the view of its object by one means or other. As he who sees any thing at a great distance, sees it imperfectly, and the least interposition or motion takes it quite out of his sight, so is it with our faith in this matter; whence sometimes we can have little, sometimes no sight at all of the glory of Christ by it. And this gives us, as we shall see, another difference between faith and sight.

Now, although the consideration hereof may seem a kind of diversion from our present argument, yet I choose to insist upon it, that I may evidence the reasons whence it is that many have so little experience of the things whereof we have treated, – that they find so little of reality or power in the exercise of this grace, or the performance of this duty. For it will appear in the issue that the whole defect is in themselves; – the truth itself insisted on is great and efficacious while we are in this life, the Lord Christ is pleased, in his sovereign wisdom, sometimes to withdraw, and, as it were, to hide himself from us. Then do our minds fall into clouds and darkness; faith is at a loss; we cannot behold his glory; yea, we may seek him, but cannot find him. So Job complains, as we observed before, *“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot*

see him,” chap. 23: 8, 9. Which way soever I turn myself, whatever are my endeavours, in what way or work of his own I seek him, I cannot find him, I cannot see him, – I cannot behold his glory. So the church also complains, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour,” Isa. 45: 15; and the Psalmist, “How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?” Ps. 89: 46. This hiding of the face of God is the hiding of the shining of his glory in the face of Christ Jesus, and therefore of the glory of Christ himself, for it is the glory of Christ to be the representative of the glory of God. The spouse in the Song of Solomon is often at a loss, and herein bemoans herself, that her Beloved was withdrawn, – that she could neither find him nor see him, chap. 3: 1, 2; 5: 6.

Men may retain their notions concerning Christ, his person and his glory. These cannot be blotted out of their minds but by heresy or obdurate stupidity. They may have the same doctrinal knowledge of him with others; but the sight of his glory does not consist therein. They may abide in the outward performance of duties towards him as formerly; but yet all this while, as unto the especial gracious communications of himself unto their souls, and as unto a cheerful refreshing view of his glory, he may withdraw and hide himself from them.

As under the same outward dispensations of the Word he does manifest himself unto some, and not unto others – (*“how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”* John 14: 22), – whereon they to whom he does so manifest himself do see him to be beautiful, glorious, and lovely (for *“unto them that believe, he is precious”*); while the others see nothing hereof, but wonder at them by whom he is admired, Song of Solomon. 5: 9; – so, in the same dispensation of the Word he sometimes hides his face, turns away the light of his countenance, clouds the beams of his glory unto some, while others are cherished and warmed with them.

Two things we must here speak unto.

- 1. Why does the Lord Christ, at any time, thus hide himself in his glory from the faith of believers, that they cannot behold him?**
- 2. How we may perceive and know that he does so withdraw himself from us, so that, however we may please ourselves, we do not indeed behold his glory.**

1. As unto the first of these, though what he does is supposed an act of sovereign, unaccountable wisdom, yet there are many holy ends of it, and consequently reasons for it. I shall mention one only. He does it to stir us up in an eminent manner unto a diligent search and inquiry after him. Woeful sloth and negligence are apt to prevail in us in our meditations on heavenly things. Though our hearts wake (as the spouse speaks, Song of Solomon 5: 2), in a valuation of Christ, his love, and his grace, yet we sleep as unto the due exercise of faith and love towards him. Who is it that can justify himself herein? – that can say, *“My heart is pure, I am clean from this sin?”* Yea, it is so far otherwise with many of us, that he is for ever to be admired in his patience, – that on the account of our unkindness and woeful negligence herein, he has not only withdrawn himself at seasons, but that he has not utterly departed from us. Now, he knows that those with whom he has been graciously present, – who have had views of his glory, although they have not valued the mercy and privilege of it as they ought, yet can they not bear a sense of his absence and his hiding himself from them. By this, therefore, will he awake them unto a diligent inquiry after him. Upon the discovery of his absence, and such a distance of his glory from them as their faith cannot reach unto it, they become like the doves of the valleys, all of them mourning every one for his iniquity, and do stir up themselves to seek him early and with diligence. See Hosea 5: 15. So wherever the spouse intimates this withdrawing of Christ from her, she immediately gives an account of her restless diligence and endeavours in her inquiries after him until she have found him, chap. 3: 1-4; 5: 2-8. And in these inquiries there is such an exercise of faith and love, though it may be acting themselves mostly in sighs and groans, as is acceptable and well-pleasing to him.

We are like him in the parable of the prophet that spake unto Ahab, who having one committed unto him to keep, affirms that while he was busy here and there, he was gone. Christ commits himself unto us, and we ought carefully to keep his presence. *“I held him,”* saith the church, *“and would not let him go,”* Song of Solomon 3: 4. But while we are busy here and there, while our minds are overfilled with other things, he withdraws himself, – we cannot find him. But even this rebuke is a sanctified ordinance for our recovery, and his return unto us.

2. Our second inquiry is, how we may know when Christ does so withdraw himself from us, that we do not, that we cannot, behold his glory.

I speak herein unto them alone who make this observation of the lively actings of faith and love in and towards Jesus Christ their chiefest concern in all their retirements, yea, in their whole walk before God. concerning these, our inquiry is, how they may know when Christ does in any degree or measure withdraw from them so as that they cannot in a due manner behold his glory.

And the first discovery hereof is by the consequent of such withdrawals. And what are the consequent of it we can know no otherwise but by the effects of his presence with us, and the manifestation of himself unto us; which, as unto some degrees, must necessarily cease thereon.

a) Now the first of these is the life, vigour, and effectual acting of all grace in us. This is an inseparable consequent and effect of a view of his glory. while we enjoy it, *we live; nevertheless not we, but Christ lives in us*, exciting and acting all his graces in us.

This is that which the apostle instructs us in; while “*we behold his glory as in a glass, we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory,*” 2 Cor. 3: 18; – that is, while by faith we contemplate on the glory of Christ as revealed in the gospel, all grace will thrive and flourish in us towards a perfect conformity unto him. For while we abide in this view and contemplation, our souls will be preserved in holy frames, and in a continual exercise of love and delight, with all other spiritual affections towards him. It is impossible, while Christ is in the eye of our faith as proposed in the Gospel, but that we shall labour to be like him, and greatly love him. Neither is there any way for us to attain unto either of these, which are the great concernments of our souls, – namely, to be like unto Christ, and to love him, – but by a constant view of him and his glory by faith; which powerfully and effectually works them in us. All the doctrinal knowledge which we have of him is useless, all the view we have of his glory is but fancy, imagination, or superstition, which are not accompanied with this transforming power. And that which is wrought by it, is the increase and vigour of all grace; for therein alone our conformity unto him does consist. Growth in grace, holiness, and obedience, is a growing like unto Christ; and nothing else is so.

I cannot refrain here from a necessary short digression. This transforming efficacy, from a spiritual view of Christ as proposed in the Gospel, being lost, as unto an experience of it, in the minds of men carnal and ignorant of the mystery of believing (as it is at present by many derided, though it be the life of religion), fancy and superstition provided various supplies in the room of it. For they found out crucifixes and images with paintings to represent him in his sufferings and glory. By these things, their carnal affections being excited by their outward senses, they suppose themselves to be affected with him, and to be like unto him. Yea, some have proceeded so far as, either by arts diabolical, or by other means, to make an appearance of wounds on their hands, and feet, and sides; therein pretending to be like him, – yea, to be wholly transformed into his image. But that which is produced by an image is but an image. An imaginary Christ will effect nothing in the minds of men but imaginary grace.

Thus religion was lost, and died. When men could not obtain any experience in their minds of the spiritual mysteries of the gospel, nor be sensible of any spiritual change or advantage by them, they substituted some outward duties and observances in their stead; as I shall show, God willing, elsewhere more at large. These produced some kind of effects on their minds and affections, but quite of another nature than those which are the real effects of true evangelical grace. This is openly evident in this substitution of images instead of the representation of Christ and his glory made in the gospel.

However, there is a general supposition granted on all hands, – namely, that there must be *a view of Christ* and his glory, to cause us to love him, and thereby to make us conformable or like unto him. But here lies the difference: – those of the church of Rome say that this must be done by the beholding of crucifixes, with other images and pictures of him; and that with our bodily eyes: we say it is by our beholding his glory by faith, as revealed in the Gospel, and no otherwise. And, to confess the truth, we have some who, as they reject the use of images, so they despise that spiritual view of the glory of Christ which we inquire after. Such persons on the first occasion will fall on the other side; for anything is better than nothing.

But, as we have a sure word of prophecy to secure us from these abominations, by an express prohibition of such images unto all ends whatever; so, unto our stability in the profession of the truth, an experience of the efficacy of this spiritual view of Christ transforming our souls into his own likeness, is absolutely necessary. For if an idolater should plead, as they do all, that in the beholding of the image of Christ, or of a crucifix, especially if they are diligent and constant therein, they find their affections unto him greatly excited, increased, and inflamed (as they will be, Isa. 57: 6); and that hereon he endeavours to be like unto him; what shall we have to oppose thereunto? For it is certain that such images are apt to make impressions on the minds of men; partly from the readiness of the senses and imagination to give them admittance into their thoughts; and partly from their natural inclinations unto superstition, their aversion from things spiritual and invisible, with an inclination unto things present and visible. Hence among them who are satisfied that they ought not to be adored with any religious veneration, yet some are apt, upon the sight of them, to entertain a thoughtful reverence, as they would do if they were to enter into a Pagan temple full of idols; and others are continually making approaches towards their use and veneration, in paintings, and altars, and such outward postures of worship as are used in the religious service of them. But that they do sensibly affect the minds of men carnal and superstitious, cannot be denied; and as they suppose, it is with a love unto Christ himself. However, certain it is in general, and confessed on all hands, that the beholding of Christ is the most blessed means of exciting all our graces, spiritualising all our affections, and transforming our minds into his likeness. And if we have not another, and that a more excellent way of beholding him, than they have who behold him, as they suppose, in images and crucifixes, they would seem to have the advantage of us; for their minds will really be affected with somewhat, ours with nothing at all. And by the pretence thereof, they beguile the carnal affections of men ignorant of the power of the gospel, to become their proselytes. For having lived, it may be, a long time without any the least experience of a sensible impression on their minds, or a transforming power from the representation of Christ in the gospel, upon their very first religious, devout application unto

these images, they find their thoughts exercised, their minds affected, and some present change made upon them.

But there was a difference between the person of David and an image with a bolster of goat's hair, though the one were laid in the room and place of the other; and there is so between Christ and an image, though the one be put into the place of the other. Neither do these things serve unto any other end, but to divert the minds of men from faith and love to Christ; giving them some such satisfactions in the room of them, as that their carnal affections do cleave unto their idols. And indeed it does belong unto the wisdom of faith, or we stand in need of spiritual light, to discern and judge between the working of natural affections towards spiritual objects, on undue motives by undue means with indirect ends, – wherein all Papal devotion consists, – and the spiritual exercise of grace in those affections duly fixed on spiritual objects.

But, as was said, it is a real experience of the efficacy that there is in the spiritual beholding of the glory of Christ by faith, as proposed in the Gospel, to strengthen, increase, and excite all grace unto its proper exercise, so changing and transforming the soul gradually into his likeness, which must secure us against all those pretences; and so I return from this digression.

Hereby we may understand whether the Lord does so withdraw himself as that we do not, as that we cannot, behold his glory by faith in a due manner; – which is the thing inquired after. For if we *grow weak in our graces*, unspiritual in our frames, cold in our affections, or negligent in the exercise of them by holy meditation, it is evident that he is at a great distance from us, so as that we do not behold his glory as we ought. If the weather grow cold, herbs and plants do wither, and the frost begins to bind up the earth, all men grant that the sun is withdrawn, and makes not his wonted approach unto us. And if it be so with our hearts, that they grow cold, frozen, withering, lifeless, in and unto spiritual duties, it is certain that the Lord Christ is in some sense withdrawn, and that we do not behold his glory. We retain notions of truth concerning his person, office, and grace; but faith is not in constant exercise as to real views of him and his glory. For there is nothing more certain in Christian experience than this is, that while we do really by faith behold the glory of Christ, as proposed in the Gospel, the glory of his person and office, as before

described, and so abide in holy thoughts and meditations thereof, especially in our private duties and retirements, all grace will live and thrive in us in some measure, especially love unto his person, and therein unto all that belongs unto him. Let us but put it to the trial, and we shall infallibly find the promised event.

Do any of us find *decays in grace* prevailing in us; – deadness, coldness, lukewarmness, a kind of spiritual stupidity and senselessness coming upon us? Do we find an unreadiness unto the exercise of grace in its proper season, and the vigorous acting of it in duties of communion with God, and would we have our souls recovered from these dangerous diseases? Let us assure ourselves there is no better way for our healing and deliverance, yea, no other way but this alone, – namely, the obtaining a fresh view of the glory of Christ by faith, and a steady abiding therein. Constant contemplation of Christ and his glory, putting forth its transforming power unto the revival of all grace, is the only relief in this case; as shall farther be showed afterward.

Some will say, that this must be effected by *fresh supplies and renewed communications of the Holy Spirit*. Unless he fall as dew and showers on our dry and barren hearts, – unless he cause our graces to spring, thrive, and bring forth fruit, – unless he revive and increase faith, love, and holiness in our souls, – our backsliding will not be healed, nor our spiritual state be recovered. Unto this end is he prayed for and promised in the Scripture. See Song of Solomon 4: 16; Isa. 44: 3, 4; Ezek. 11: 19; 36: 26; Hos. 14: 5, 6. And so it is. The immediate efficiency of the revival of our souls is from and by the Holy Spirit. But the inquiry is, in what way, or by what means, we may obtain the supplies and communications of him unto this end. This the apostle declares in the place insisted on: We, beholding the glory of Christ in a glass, “*are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord.*” It is in the exercise of faith on Christ, in the way before described, that the Holy Spirit puts forth his renewing, transforming power in and upon our souls. This, therefore, is that alone which will retrieve Christians from their present decays and deadness.

Some *complain* greatly of their state and condition; none so dead, so dull and stupid as they; – they know not whether they have any spark of heavenly life left in them. Some make weak and faint

endeavours for a recovery, which are like the attempts of a man in a dream, wherein he seems to use great endeavours without any success. Some put themselves unto multiplied duties. Howbeit, the generality of professors seem to be in a pining, thriftless condition. And the reason of it is, because they will not sincerely and constantly make use of the only remedy and relief; like a man that will rather choose to pine away in his sickness with some useless, transient refreshments, than apply himself unto a known and approved remedy, because, it may be, the use of it is unsuited unto some of his present occasions. Now this is, to live in the exercise of faith in Christ Jesus. This he himself assures us of, John 15: 4, 5, "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing*".

There is a twofold *coming unto Christ by believing*. The first is that we may have life; – that is, a spring and principle of spiritual life communicated unto us from him: for he is "*our life*," Col. 3: 4, and "because he liveth, we live also," John 14: 19. Yea, it is not so much we that live, as he liveth in us, Gal. 2: 19, 20. And unbelief is a *not coming unto him*, that we may have life, John 5: 40. But, secondly, there is also a coming unto him by believers in the actual exercise of faith, that they may "*have this life more abundantly*," John 10: 10; that is, such supplies of grace as may keep their souls in a healthy, vigorous acting of all the powers of spiritual life. And as he reproaches some that they would not come unto him that they might have life, so he may justly reprove us all, that we do not so come unto him in the actual exercise of faith, as that we might have this life more abundantly.

b) When the Lord Christ is near us, and we do behold his glory, he will frequently communicate spiritual refreshment in peace, consolation, and joy unto our souls. We shall not only hereby have our graces excited with respect unto him as their object, but be made sensible of his acting toward us in the communications of himself and his love unto us. When the Sun of Righteousness arises on any soul, or makes any near approach thereunto, it shall find "*healing under his wings*;" this beams of grace shall convey by his Spirit holy spiritual refreshment thereunto. For he is present with us by his Spirit, and

these are his fruits and effects, as he is the Comforter, suited unto his office, as he is promised unto us.

Many love to walk in a very careless, unwise profession. So long as they can hold out in the performance of outward duties, they are very regardless of the greatest evangelical privileges, – of those things which are the marrow of divine promises, – all real endeavours of a vital communion with Christ. Such are spiritual peace, refreshing consolations, ineffable joys, and the blessed composure of assurance. Without some taste and experience of these things, profession is heartless, lifeless, useless; and religion itself a dead carcass without an animating soul. The peace which some enjoy is a mere stupidity. They judge not these things to be real which are the substance of Christ's present reward; and a renunciation whereof would deprive the church of its principal supports and encouragements in all its sufferings. It is a great evidence of the power of unbelief, when we can satisfy ourselves without an experience in our own hearts of the great things, in this kind of joy, peace, consolation, assurance, that are promised in the Gospels. For how can it be supposed that we do indeed relieve the promises of future things, – namely, of heaven, immortality, and glory, the faith whereof is the foundation of all religions, – when we do not relieve the promises of the present reward in these spiritual privileges? And how shall we be thought to believe them, when we do not endeavour after an experience of the things themselves in our own souls, but are even contented without them? But herein men deceive themselves. They would very desirously have evangelical joy, peace, and assurance, to countenance them in their evil frames and careless walking. And some have attempted to reconcile these things, unto the ruin of their souls. But it will not be. Without the diligent exercise of the grace of obedience, we shall never enjoy the grace of consolation. But we must speak somewhat of these things afterward.

It is peculiarly in the view of the glory of Christ, in his approaches unto us, and abiding with us, that we are made partakers of evangelical peace, consolation, joy, and assurances. These are a part of the royal train of his graces, of the reward wherewith he is accompanied. *“His reward is with him.”* Wherever he is graciously present with any, these things are never wanting in a due measure and degree, unless it be by their own fault, or for their trial. In these things

does he give the church of his loves, Song of Solomon 7: 12. *“For if any man,”* saith he, *“love me, I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him,”* John 14: 21; – *“yea, I and the Father will come unto him, and make our abode with him,”* verse 23; and that so as to *“sup with him,”* Rev. 3: 20; – which, on his part, can be only by the communication of those spiritual refreshments. The only inquiry is, by what way and means we do receive them? Now, I say this is in and by our beholding of the glory of Christ by faith, 1 Peter 1: 8, 9. Let that glory be rightly stated, as before laid down, – the glory of his person, his office, his condescension, exaltation, love, and grace; let faith be fixed in a view and contemplation of it, mix itself with it, as represented in the glass of the gospel, meditate upon it, embrace it, and virtue will proceed from Christ, communicating spiritual, supernatural refreshment and joy unto our souls. Yea, in ordinary cases, it is impossible that believers should have a real prospect of this glory at any time, but that it will in some measure affect their hearts with a sense of his love; which is the spring of all consolation in them. In the exercise of faith on the discoveries of the glory of Christ made unto us in the Gospel, no man shall ever totally want such intimations of his love, yea, such effusion of it in his heart, as shall be a living spring of those spiritual refreshments, John 4: 14; Rom 5: 5. When, therefore, we lose these things, as unto a sense of them in our souls, it is evident that the Lord Christ is withdrawn, and that we do not behold his glory.

But I cannot here avoid another short digression. There are those by whom all these things are derided as distempered fancies and imaginations; yea, such things have been spoken and written of them as contain a virtual renunciation of the gospel, the powers of the world to come, and the whole work of the Holy Ghost as the comforter of the church. And hereby all real intercourse between the person of Christ and the souls of them that do believe is utterly overthrown; – reducing all religion to an outward show, and a pageantry fitter for a stage than that temple of God which is in the minds of men. According unto the sentiments of these profane scoffers, there is no such thing as the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, nor as the witnessing of the Spirit of God with our spirits that we are the children of God, from which these spiritual joys and refreshments are inseparable as their

necessary effects; – no such thing as the lifting up of the light of God’s countenance upon us, which will put gladness into our hearts, that gladness which comprises all the things mentioned; – no such thing as rejoicing upon “*believing, with joy unspeakable and full of glory*,” – no such thing as Christ’s showing and manifesting himself unto us, supping with us, and giving us of his loves; – that the divine promises of a “*feast of fat things, and wine well refined*,” in gospel mercies, are empty and insignificant words; – that all those ravishing joys and exultations of spirit that multitudes of faithful martyrs of old and in later ages have enjoyed, by a view of the glory of God in Christ and a sense of his love, whereunto they gave testimony unto their last moments in the midst of their torments, were but fancies and imaginations. But it is the height of impudence in these profane scoffers, that they proclaim their own ignorance of those things which are the real powers of our region.

Others are there who will not deny the truth of these things. They dare not rise up in contradiction unto those express testimonies of the Scripture wherewith they are confirmed. And they do suppose that some are partakers of them, at least there were so formerly; but as for their parts, they have no experience of them, nor do judge it their duty to endeavour after it. They can make a shift to live on hopes of heaven and future glory; as unto what is present, they desire no more, but to be found in the performance of some duties in answer unto their convictions, – which gives them that sorry peace which they do enjoy. So do many countenance themselves in their spiritual sloth and unbelief, keeping themselves at liberty to seek for refreshment and satisfaction in other things, while those of the gospel are despised. And these things are inconsistent. While men look for their chief refreshment and satisfaction in temporal things, it is impossible they should seek after those that are spiritual in a due manner. And it must be confessed, that when we have a due regard unto spiritual, evangelical consolations and joys, it will abate and take off our affections unto, and satisfaction in, present enjoyments, Phil. 3: 8, 9.

But there is no more sacred truth than this, that where Christ is present with believers, – where he is not withdrawn for a season from them, where they live in the view of his glory by faith as it is proposed unto them in the gospel, – he will give unto them, at his own seasons such intimations of his love, such supplies of his Spirit,

such holy joys and rejoicings, such repose of soul in assurance, as shall refresh their souls, fill them with joy, satisfy them with spiritual delight, and quicken them unto all acts of holy communion with himself.

Let no such dishonour be reflected on the gospel, that whereas the faith of it, and obedience unto it, are usually accompanied with outward troubles, afflictions, persecution, and reproaches, as we are foretold they should be, – that it does not by its inward consolations and divine refreshments, outbalance all those evils which we may undergo upon the account of it. So to suppose, is expressly contrary to the promise of Christ himself, who has assured us that even “*nun en toi kairoi toutoi*”, “*even now in this life,*” in this world, distinct from eternal life in the world to come, we shall receive a hundred-fold recompense for all that we can lose or suffer for his sake, Mark 10: 30; – as also unto the experience of them who, in all ages, have “*taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, as knowing in themselves*” (by the experience which they have of its first-fruits) that they “*have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,*” Heb. 10: 34. If we come short in a participation of these things, if we are strangers unto them, the blame is to be laid on ourselves alone, as it shall be immediately declared.

Now, the design of the Lord Christ, in thus withdrawing himself from us, and hiding his glory from our view, being the exercise of our grace, and to stir us up unto diligence in our inquiries after him, here lies our guidance and direction in this case. Do we find ourselves lifeless in the spiritual duties of religion? Are we strangers unto the heavenly visits of consolation and joys, – those visitations of God whereby he preserves our souls? Do we seldom enjoy a sense of the “*shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the holy Ghost?*” We have no way of recovery but this alone, – to this “*strong tower*” we must turn ourselves as “*prisoners of hope,*” unto Christ must we look, that we may be saved. It is a steady view or contemplation of his glory by faith alone that will bring in all these things in a lively experience into our hearts and souls.

Again, in the second place, it is from ourselves principally, if we lose the view of the glory of Christ, and the exercise of faith be obstructed therein. All our spiritual disadvantages do arise from ourselves. It is the remainder of lusts and corruptions in us, either

indulged by sloth and negligence or excited and inflamed by Satan's temptations, that do obstruct us in this duty. while they are in any disorder or disturbance, it is in vain for us to expect any clear view of this glory.

That view of the glory of Christ whereof we treat consists in two things, – namely, its especial nature, and its necessary adjunct or effect. The first is, a ritual perception or understanding of it as revealed in the Scriptures. For the revelation of the glory of his person, office, and grace, is the principal subject of them, and the principal object of our faith. And the other consists in multiplied thoughts about him, with acting of faiths in love, trust, delight, and longing after the full enjoyment of him, 1 Peter 1: 8. If we satisfy ourselves in mere notions and speculations about the glory of Christ as doctrinally revealed unto us, we shall find no transforming power or efficacy communicated unto us thereby. But when, under the conduct of that spiritual light, our affections do cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, our minds are filled with the thoughts of him and delight in him, and faith is kept up unto its constant exercise in trust and affiance on him, – virtue will proceed from him to purify our hearts, increase our holiness, strengthen our graces, and to fill us sometimes “*with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” This is the just temperature of a state of spiritual health, – namely, when our light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ does answer the means of it which we enjoy, and when our affections unto Christ do hold proportion unto that light; and this according unto the various degrees of it, – for some have more, and some have less. Where light leaves the affections behind, it ends in formality or atheism; and where affections outrun light, they sink in the bog of superstition, doting on images and pictures, or the like. But where things go not into these excesses, it is better that our affections exceed our light from the defect of our understandings, than that our light exceed our affections from the corruption of our wills. In both these is the exercise of faith frequently interrupted and obstructed by the remainder of corruption in us, especially if not kept constantly under the disciplines of mortification, but some way indulged unto. For, –

First, The *steam of their disorder* will cloud and darken the understanding, that it shall not be able clearly to discern any spiritual object, – least of all the greatest of them. There is nothing more

acknowledged, even in things natural and moral, than that the disorder of the passions and affections will blind, darken, and deceive the mind in its operations. And it is much more so in things spiritual, wherein that disorder is an immediate rebellion against its proper conducting light; that is, against the light and rule of grace.

There are three sorts of them unto whom the Gospel is preached, in whom there are various obstructions of this view.

1. *There is in obstinate unbelievers a darkness, that is an effect of the power of Satan on their minds, in blinding them,* which makes it impossible for them to behold any thing of the glory of Christ. So the apostle declares it, *“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,”* 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4. Of these we do not speak.

2. *There is in all men a corrupt, natural darkness; or such a depravation of their minds by nature,* as that they cannot discern this glory of Christ in a due manner. Hence *“the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not,”* John 1: 5. For *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,”* 1 Cor. 2: 14. Hence it is, that although Christ be preached among us continually, yet there are very few who discern any glory or beauty in him for which he should be desired, as the prophet complaint, Isa. 53: 1, 2. But I speak not of this natural darkness in general. But even these persons have their minds filled with prejudices against the gospel, and darkened as unto the glory of Christ, according as corrupt lusts and affections are prevalent in them. See John 1: 46; 12: 43. Hence is the difference that is among the common hearers of the Word. For although no man can do any thing of himself for the receiving of Christ and the beholding of his glory, without the special aid of the grace of God (Matt. 11: 25; John 6: 44, 45), yet some may make more opposition unto believing, and lay more hindrances in their own way, than others; this is done by their lusts and corruptions.

3. *There are those in whom both these evils are cured by faith,* wherein the eyes of our understandings are enlightened to perceive and discern spiritual things, Eph. 1: 16-18. But this cure is wrought in

this life but in part, 1 Cor. 13: 12. And in this cure, by a supply of a principle of saving light unto our minds, there are many degrees. For some have a clearer light than others, and thereby a more clear discerning of the mystery of the wisdom of God, and of the glory of Christ therein. But whatever be our attainments herein, that which obstructs this light, which hinders it from shining in a due manner, that obstructs and hinders faith in its view of the glory of Christ. And this is done by the remainders of corrupted nature in us, when they act in any prevalent degree. For they darken the mind, and weaken it in its spiritual operations. That is, where any corrupt and inordinate affections, as love of the world, cares about it, inclinations unto sensuality, or the like spiritual disorders, do prevail, faith is weakened in its spiritual acts, especially in discerning and beholding the glory of Christ. For the mind is rendered unsteady in its inquiries after it, being continually distracted and diverted with vain thoughts and imaginations.

Persons under the power of such disorder may have the same doctrinal knowledge of the person of Christ, his office, and his grace, with other men, and the same evidence of its truth fixed on their minds; but when they endeavour a real intuition into the things themselves, all things are dark and confused unto them, from the uncertainty and instability of their own minds.

This is the sum of what I do design. We have by faith a view of the glory of Christ. This view is weak and unsteady, from the nature of faith itself, and the way of its proposal unto us as in a glass, in comparison of what by sight we shall attain unto. But, moreover, where corrupt lusts or inordinate affections are indulged unto, where they are not continually mortified, where any one sin has a perplexing prevalence in the mind, faith will be so far weakened thereby, as that it can neither see nor meditate upon this glory of Christ in a due manner. This is the reason why the most are so weak and unstable in the performance of this duty; yea, are almost utterly unacquainted with it. The light of faith in the minds of men being impaired, clouded, darkened, by the prevalence of unmortified lusts, it cannot make such discoveries of this glory as otherwise it would do. And this makes the preaching of Christ unto many so unprofitable as it is.

Second, In the view of the glory of Christ which we have by faith, it will fill the mind with thoughts and meditations about him,

whereon the affections will cleave unto him with delight. This, as was said, is inseparable from a spiritual view of his glory in its due exercise. Every one that has it, must and will have many thoughts concerning, and great affections to him. See the description of these things, Phil. 3: 8-10. It is not possible, I say, that we should behold the glory of his person, office, and grace, with a due conviction of our concernment and interest therein, but that our minds will be greatly affected with it, and be filled with contemplations about it. Where it is not so with any, it is to be feared that they *"have not heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape,"* whatever they profess. A spiritual sight of Christ will assuredly produce love unto him; and if any man love him not, he never saw him, – he knows him not at all. And that is no love which does not beget in us many thoughts of the object beloved. He, therefore, who is partaker of this grace, will think much of what Christ is in himself, – of what he has done for us, – of his love and condescension, – of the manifestation of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature in him, exerted in a way of infinite wisdom and goodness for the salvation of the church. Thoughts and meditations of these things will abound in us, if we are not wanting unto the due exercise of faith; and intense, inflamed affections unto him will ensue thereon; at least they will be active unto our own refreshing experience. And where these things are not in reality (though in some they may be only in a mean and low degree), men do but deceive their own souls in hopes of any benefit by Christ or the gospel.

This, therefore, is the present case: – Where there are prevailing sinful distemper or inordinate affections in the mind, such as those before mentioned, as self-love, love of the world, cares and fears about it, with an excessive valuation of relations and enjoyments, – they will so far cumber and perplex it with a multitude of thoughts about their own objects, as shall leave no place for sedate meditations on Christ and his glory. And where the thoughts are engaged, the affections, which partly excite them and partly are led by them, will be fixed also," Col. 3: 1, 2.

This is that which, in the most, greatly promotes that imperfection which is in our view of the glory of Christ by faith, in this life. According to the proportion and degree of the prevalence of affections, corrupt, earthly, selfish, or sensual, filling the heads and

hearts of men with a multitude of thoughts about what they are fixed on or inclined unto; so is faith obstructed and weakened in this work and duty.

Wherefore, whereas there is a remainder of these lusts, as to the seeds of them, in us all, – though more mortified in some than in others, yet having the same effects in the minds of all, according to the degree of their remainder, – thence it is, as from an efficacious cause of it, that our view of the glory of Christ by faith is in many so weak, imperfect and unsteady.

Third, We have interruption given unto the work of faith herein by the *temptations* of Satan. His original great design, wherever the gospel is preached, is to blind the eyes of men, that the *light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them*, or irradiate their minds, 2 Cor. 4: 4. And herein he prevails unto astonishment. Let the light of the gospel in the preaching of the Word be never so glorious, yet, by various means and artifices, he blinds the minds of the most, that they shall not behold any thing of the glory of Christ therein. By this means he continues his rule in the children of disobedience. With respect unto the elect, God overpowers him herein. He shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ Jesus, verse 6. Yet will not Satan so relinquish. He will endeavour by all ways and means to trouble, unsettle, and darken the minds even of them that believe, so as that they shall not be able to retain clear and distinct views of this glory. And this he does in two ways.

1. With some he employs all his engines, uses all his methods of serpentine subtlety, and casts in his fiery darts so to disquiet, unsettle, and deject them, as that they can retain no comfortable views of Christ or his glory. Hence arise fears, doubts, disputes, uncertainties, with various disconsolations. Hereon they cannot apprehend the love of Christ, nor be sensible of any interest they have therein, or any refreshing persuasions that they are accepted with him. If such things sometimes shine and beam into their minds, yet they quickly vanish and appear. Fears that they are rejected and cast off by him, that he will not receive them here nor hereafter, do come in their place; hence are they filled with anxieties and despondencies, under which it is impossible they should have any clear view of his glory.

I know that ignorance, atheism, and obstinate security in sensual sins, do combine to despise all these things. But it is no new thing in the world, that men outwardly professing Christian religion, when they find gain in that godliness, should speak evil of the things which they know not, and corrupt themselves in what they know naturally, as brute beasts.

2. With others he deals after another manner. By various means he seduces them into a careless security, wherein they promise peace unto themselves without any diligent search into these things. Hereon they live in a general presumption that they shall be saved by Christ, although they know not how. This makes the apostle so earnest in pressings the duty of self-examination on all Christians, 2 Cor. 13: 5, *“Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* The rule of self-judging prescribed by him is, whether Christ be in us or no; and in us he cannot be, unless he be received by that faith wherewith we behold his glory. For by faith we receive him, and by faith he dwelleth in our hearts, John 1: 12; Eph 3: 17.

This is the principal way of his prevailing in the world. Multitudes by his seduction live in great security under the utmost neglect of these things. Security is granted to be an evil destructive of the souls of men; but then it is supposed to consist only in impenitence for great and open sins: but to be neglective of endeavouring an experience of the power and grace of the gospel in our own souls, under a profession of religion, is no less destructive and pernicious than impenitence in any course of sin.

These and the like obstructions unto faith in its operations being added unto its own imperfections, are another cause whence our view of the glory of Christ in this world is weak and unsteady; so that, for the most part, it does but transiently affect our minds, and not so fully transform them into his likeness as otherwise it would.

It is now time to consider that sight which we shall have of the glory of Christ in heaven, in comparison of that which we have here below. Now this is equal, stable, always the same, – without interruption or diversion. And this is evident, both in the causes or means of it, as also in our perfect deliverance from every thing that might be a hindrance in it, or an obstruction unto it.

1. We may consider the state of our minds in glory. The faculties of our souls shall then be made perfect, Heb 12: 23, “*The spirits of just men made perfect.*”

a) Freed from all the clogs of the flesh, and all its influence upon them, and restraint of their powers in their operation

b Perfectly purified from all principles of instability and variety, – of all inclinations unto things sensual and carnal, and all contrivances of self-preservation or advancement, – being wholly transformed into the image of God in spirituality and holiness. And to take in the state of our bodies after the resurrection; even they also, in all their powers and senses, shall be made entirely subservient unto the most spiritual actings of our minds in their highest elevation by the light of glory. Hereby shall we be enabled and fitted eternally to abide in the contemplation of the glory of Christ with joy and satisfaction. The understanding shall be always perfected with the vision of God, and the affections cleave inseparably to him; – which is blessedness.

The very *essential faculties* of our souls, in that way and manner of working which, by their union with our bodies, they are confined unto, are not able to comprehend and abide constantly in the contemplation of this glory. So that, though our sight of it here be dim and imperfect, and the proposal of it obscure; yet, from the weakness of our minds, we are forced sometimes to turn aside from what we do discern, as we do our bodily eyes from the beams of the sun when it shines in its brightness. But in this perfect state they are able to behold and delight in this glory constantly with eternal satisfaction.

But “*as for me,*” saith David, “*I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness,*” Ps. 17: 15. It is Christ *alone* who is the likeness and image of God. When we awake in the other world, with our minds purified and rectified, the beholding of him shall be always satisfying unto us. There will be then no satiety, no weariness, no indispositions; but the mind, being made perfect in all its faculties, powers, and operations, with respect unto its utmost end, which is the enjoyment of God, is satisfied in the beholding of him for evermore. And where there is perfect satisfaction without satiety, there is blessedness for ever. So the Holy Spirit affirms of the four living creatures, in the Revelation, “*They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God*

Almighty,” chap. 4: 8. They are continually exercised in the admiration and praises of God in Christ without weariness or interruption. Herein shall we be made like unto angels.

2. As our minds, in their essential powers and faculties, shall be enabled to comprehend and acquiesce in this glory of Christ; so the means or instrument of the beholding of it is much more excellent than faith, and in its kind absolutely perfect; as has in part been before declared. This is *vision* or *sight*. Here we walk by faith; there, by sight. And this sight is not an external aid, like a glass helping the weakness of the visual faculty to see things afar off; but it is an internal power, or an act of the internal power of our minds, where with they are endowed in a glorified state. Hereby we shall be able to “*see him face to face, – to see him as he is,*” in a direct comprehension of his glory; for this sight or visual power shall be given us for this very end, – namely, to enable us so to do. Hereunto the whole glory of Christ is clear, perspicuous, and evident; which will give us eternal acquiescence therein. Hence shall our sight of the glory of Christ be invariable and always the same.

3. The Lord Christ will never, in any one instance, on any occasion, so much as one moment, withdraw himself from us, or eclipse the proposal and manifestation of himself unto our sight. This he does sometimes in this life; and it is needful for us that so he should do. “*We shall ever be with the Lord,*” 1 Thess. 4: 17, – without end, without interruption. This is the centre of good and evil as to the future different states of men. They shall be for ever. Eternity makes them absolutely good on the one hand, and absolutely evil on the other. To be in hell under the wrath of God is in itself the greatest penal evil; but to be there for ever, without the intermission of misery or determination of time, is that which renders it the greatest evil unto them who shall be in that condition. So is eternity the life of future blessedness. “*We shall ever be with the Lord,*” without limitation of time, without interruption of enjoyment.

There are no vicissitudes in the heavenly state. The new Jerusalem has no temple in it; “*for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof,*” Rev. 21: 22. There is no need of instituted means of worship, nor of ordinances of divine service; for we shall need neither increase of grace nor excitations unto its exercise; the constant, immediate, uninterrupted enjoyment of God

and the Lamb supplies all. And it has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God does enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. The light of the sun is excellent; howbeit it has its seasons; – after it has shone in its brightest lustre, it gives place to the night and darkness. So is the light of the moon of great use in the night; but it has its seasons also. Such is the light we have of the glory of God and the Lamb in this world. Sometimes it is as the light of the sun, which, under the gospel, is sevenfold, as the light of seven days in one in comparison of the Law, Isa. 30: 26; sometimes as the light of the moon, which giveth relief in the night of temptations and trials. But it is not constant; we are under a vicissitude of light and darkness, – views of Christ, and a loss of him. But in heaven the perpetual presence of Christ with his saints makes it always one noon of light and glory.

4. *This vision is not in the least liable unto any weakening from internal defects, nor any assaults from temptations,* as is the sight of faith in this life. No doubts or fears, no disturbing darts or injections, shall there have any place. There shall no habit, no quality, no inclination or disposition remain in our souls, but what shall eternally lead us unto the contemplation of the glory of Christ with delight and complacency. Nor will there be any defect in the gracious powers of our souls, as unto a perpetual exercise of them; and as to all other opposing enemies, we shall be in a perpetual triumph over them, 1 Cor. 15: 55-57. The mouth of iniquity shall be stopped for ever, and the voice of the self-avenger shall be heard no more.

Wherefore, the vision which we shall have in heaven of the glory of Christ is *serene*, – always the same, always new and unceasing, wherein nothing can disturb the mind in the most perfect operations of a blessed life. And when all the faculties of the soul can, without any internal weakness or external hindrances, exercise their most perfect operations on the most perfect object, – therein lies all the blessedness which our nature is capable of.

Wherefore, whenever in this life we attain any comfortable, refreshing view of the glory of Christ by the exercise of faith on the revelation of it, with a sense of our interest therein, we cannot but long after, and desire to come unto, this more perfect, abiding, invariable aspect of it.

PART I · CHAPTER 14

Other Differences between our Beholding the Glory of Christ by Faith in this World and by Sight in Heaven

Among the many other differences which might be insisted on (although the greatest of them are unto us at present absolutely incomprehensible, and so not to be inquired into), I shall name two only, and so put a close to this Discourse.

I. In the view which we have here of the glory of Christ by faith, we gather things, as it were, one by one, in several parts and parcels out of the Scripture; and comparing them together in our minds, they become the object of our present sight, – which is our spiritual comprehension of the things themselves. We have no proposal of the glory of Christ unto us by vision or illustrious appearance of his person, as Isaiah had of old, chap. 6: 1-4; or as John had in the Revelation, chap. 1: 13-16. We need it not; – it would be of no advantage unto us. For as unto the assurance of our faith, we have a word of prophecy more useful unto us than a voice from heaven, 2 Peter 1: 17-19. And of those who received such visions, though of eminent use unto the church, yet as unto themselves, one of them cried out, “*Woe is me! I am undone;*” and the other “*fell as dead at his feet.*” We are not able in this life to bear such glorious representations of him, unto our edification.

And as we have no such external proposals of his glory unto us in *visions*, so neither have we any new revelations of him by *immediate inspiration*. We can see nothing of it, know nothing of it but what is proposed unto us in the Scripture, and that as it is proposed. Nor does the Scripture itself, in any one place, make an entire proposal of the glory of Christ with all that belongs unto it; nor is it capable of so doing, nor can there be any such representation of it unto our capacity on this side heaven. If all the light of the heavenly luminaries had

been contracted into one, it would have been destructive, not useful, to our sight; but being by divine wisdom distributed into sun, moon, and stars, each giving out his own proportion, it is suited to declare the glory of God and to enlighten the world. So, if the whole revelation of the glory of Christ, and all that belongs unto it, had been committed into one series and contexture of words, it would have overwhelmed our minds rather than enlightened us. Wherefore God has distributed the light of it through the whole firmament of the books of the Old and New Testament; whence it communicates itself, by various parts and degrees, unto the proper use of the church. In one place we have a description of his person, and the glory of it; sometimes in words plain and proper, and sometimes in great variety of allegories, conveying a heavenly sense of things unto the minds of them that do believe; – in others, of his love and condescension in his office, and his glory therein. His humiliation, exaltation, and power, are in like manner in sundry places represented unto us. And as one star differs from another in glory, so it was one way whereby God represented the glory of Christ in types and shadows under the Old Testament, and another wherein it is declared in the New. Illustrious testimonies unto all these things are planted up and down in the Scripture, which we may collect as choice flowers in the paradise of God, for the object of our faith and sight thereby.

So the spouse in the Song of Solomon considered every part of the person and grace of Christ distinctly by itself, and from them all concludes that “*he is altogether lovely*,” chap. 5: 10-16. So ought we to do in our study of the Scripture, to find out the revelation of the glory of Christ which is made therein, as did the prophets of old, as unto what they themselves received by immediate inspiration. They “*searched diligently what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*,” 1 Peter 1: 11. But this seeing of Christ by parts in the revelation of him is one cause why we see him here but in parts.

Some suppose that by chopping, and painting, and gilding, they can make an image of Christ that shall perfectly represent him to their senses and carnal affections from head to foot. But they “*feed on ashes*” and have “*a lie in their right hand*.” Jesus Christ is evidently crucified before our eyes in the Scripture, Gal 3: 1. So also is he

evidently exalted and glorified therein. And it is the wisdom of faith to gather into one those parcelled descriptions that are given of him, that they may be the object of its view and contemplation.

In the vision which we shall have above, the whole glory of Christ will be at once and always represented unto us; and we shall be enabled in one act of the light of glory to comprehend it. Here, indeed, we are at a loss; – our minds and understandings fail us in their contemplations. It will not yet enter into our hearts to conceive what is the beauty, what is the glory of this complete representation of Christ unto us. To have at once all the glory of what he is, what he was in his outward state and condition, what he did and suffered, what he is exalted unto, – his love and condescension, his mystical union with the church, and the communication of himself unto it, with the recapitulation of all things in him, – and the glory of God, even the Father, in his wisdom, righteousness, grace, love, goodness, power, shining forth eternally in him, in what he is, has done, and does, all presented unto us in one view, all comprehended by us at once, is that which at present we cannot conceive. We can long for it, pant after it, and have some foretastes of it, – namely, of that state and season wherein our whole souls, in all their powers and faculties, shall constantly, inseparably, eternally cleave by love unto whole Christ, in the sight of the glory of his person and grace, until they are watered, dissolved, and inebriated in the waters of life and the rivers of pleasure that are above for evermore. So must we speak of the things which we admire, which we adore, which we love, which we long for, which we have some foretastes of in sweetness ineffable, which yet we cannot comprehend.

These are some few of those things whence arises the difference between that view which we have here of the glory of Christ, and that which is reserved for heaven, – namely, such as are taken from the difference between the means or instruments of the one and the other, faith and sight.

II. In the last place, the great difference between them consists in, and is manifested by, their effects. Hereof I shall give some few instances, and close this Discourse.

First, The vision which we shall have of the glory of Christ in heaven, and of the glory of the immense God in him, is perfectly and absolutely transforming. It does change us wholly into the image of

Christ. When we shall see him, we shall be as he is; we shall be like him, because we shall see him, 1 John 3: 2. But although the closing, perfecting act of this transformation be an act of sight, or the sight of glory, yet there are many things towards it, or degrees in it, which we may here take notice of in our way.

1. The soul, upon its departure from the body, is immediately freed from all the weakness, ability, darkness, uncertainties, and fears, which were impressed on it from the flesh, wherewith it was in the strictest union. The image of the first Adam as fallen is then abolished. Yea, it is not only freed from all irregular, sinful distemper cleaving to our nature as corrupted, but from all those sinless grievances and infirmities which belong unto the original constitution of it. This necessarily ensues on the dissolution of the person in order unto a blessed state. The first entrance by mortality into immortality, is a step towards glory. The ease which a blessed soul finds in a deliverance from this encumbrance, is a door of entrance into eternal rest. Such a change is made in that which in itself is the centre of all evil, – namely, death, – that it is made a means of freeing us from all the remainders of what is evil.

For this does not follow absolutely on the nature of the thing itself. A mere dissolution of our natures can bring no advantage with it, especially as it is a part of the curse. But it is from the sanctification of it by the death of Christ. Hereby that which was God's ordinance for the infliction of judgement, becomes an effectual means for the communication of mercy, 1 Cor. 15: 22, 54. It is by virtue of the death of Christ alone, that the souls of believers are freed by death from all impressions of sin, infirmity, and evils, which they have had from the flesh; which were their burden, under which they groaned all their days. No man knows in any measure the excellency of this privilege, and the dawns of glory which are in it, who has not been wearied, and even worn out, through long conflicting with the body of death. The soul hereon being freed from all annoyances, all impressions from the flesh, is expedite and enlarged unto the exercise of all its gracious faculties, as we shall see immediately.

With wicked men it is not so. Death unto them is a curse; and the curse is the means of the conveyance of all evil, and not deliverance from any. Wherein they have been warmed and refreshed by the influences of the flesh, they shall be deprived of it. But their souls in

their separate state, are perpetually harassed with all the disquieting passions which have been impressed on their minds by their corrupt fleshly lusts. In vain do such persons look for relief by death. If there be any thing remaining of present good and usefulness to them, they shall be deprived of it. And their freedom for a season from bodily pains in no way lie in the balance against that confluence of evils which death will let in upon them.

2. *The “spirits of just men,” being freed by death from the clog of the flesh, not yet refined, – all the faculties of their souls, and all the graces in them, as faith, love, and delight, are immediately set at liberty,* enabled constantly to exercise themselves on God in Christ. The end for which they were created, for which our nature was endowed with them, was, that we might adhere unto God by them, and come unto the enjoyment of him. Being now freed wholly from all that impotency, perverseness, and disability unto this end, with all the effects of them, which came upon them by the fall; they are carried with a full stream towards God, cleaving unto him with the most intense embraces. And all their acting towards God shall be natural, with facility, joy, delight, and complacency. We know not yet the excellency of the operations of our souls in divine things, when disburdened of their present weight of the flesh. And this is a second step towards the consummation of glory. For, –

In the *resurrection of the body*, upon its full redemption, it shall be so purified, sanctified, glorified, as to give no obstruction unto the soul in its operations, but be a blessed organ for its highest and most spiritual actings. The body shall never more be a trouble, a burden unto the soul, but an assistant in its operations, and participant of its blessedness. Our eyes were made to see our Redeemer, and our other senses to receive impressions from him, according unto their capacity. As the bodies of wicked men shall be restored unto them to increase and complete their misery in their sufferings; so shall the bodies of the just be restored unto them, to heighten and consummate their blessedness.

3. *These things are preparatory unto glory.* The complete communication of it is by the infusion of a new heavenly light into the mind, enabling us to see the Lord Christ as he is. The soul shall not be brought into the immediate presence of Christ without a new power, to behold him and the immediate representation of his glory.

Faith does now cease, as unto the manner of its operation in this life, while we are absent from Christ. This light of glory succeeds into its room, fitted for that state and all the ends of it, as faith is for that which is present. And, –

4. In the first operation of this light of glory, believers shall so behold the glory of Christ, and the glory of God in him, as that there with and thereby they shall be immediately and universally changed into his likeness. They shall be as he is, when they shall see him as he is. There is no growth in glory, as to parts; – there may be as to degrees. Additions may be outwardly made unto what is at first received as by the resurrection of the body; but the internal light of glory and its transforming efficacy is capable of no degrees, though new revelations may be made unto it unto eternity. For the infinite fountain of life, and light, and goodness, can never be fathomed, much less exhausted. And what God spake on the entrance of sin, by the way of contempt and reproach, “*Behold, the man is become like one of us,*” upbraiding him with what he had foolishly designed; – on the accomplishment of the work of his grace, he says in love and infinite goodness, “*Man is become like one of us,*” in the perfect restoration of our image in him. This is the first effect of the light of glory.

Faith also, in beholding the glory of Christ in this life, is accompanied with a transforming efficacy, as the apostle expressly declares, 2 Cor. 3: 18. It is the principle from whence, and the instrumental cause whereby, all spiritual change is wrought in us in this life; but the work of it is imperfect; – first, because it is gradual, and then because it is partial.

a) As unto the manner of its operation, it is gradual, and does not at once transform us into the image of Christ; yes, the degrees of its progress therein are unto us for the most part imperceptible. It requires much spiritual wisdom and observation to obtain an experience of them in our own souls. “*The inward man is renewed day by day,*” while we behold these invisible things, 2 Cor. 4: 16-18. *But how?* – even as the outward man decays by age, which is by insensible degrees and alterations. Such is the transformation which we have by faith, in its present view of the glory of Christ. And according to our experience of its efficacy herein, is our evidence of its truth and reality in the beholding of him. No man can have the

least ground of assurance that he has seen Christ and his glory by faith, without some effects of it in changing him into his likeness. For as on the touch of his garment by the woman in the Gospel, virtue went out from him to heal her infirmity; so upon this view of faith, an influence of transforming power will proceed from Christ unto the soul.

b) As unto the event, it is but partial. It does not bring this work unto perfection. The change wrought by it is indeed great and glorious; or, as the apostle speaks, it is “*from glory to glory*,” in a progress of glorious grace: but absolute perfection is reserved for vision. As to divine worship, perfection was not by the law. It did many things preparatory unto the revelation of the will of God concerning it, but it “*made nothing perfect*,” so absolute perfection in holiness, and the restoration of the image of God, is not by the Gospel, is not by faith; – however, it gives us many preparatory degrees unto it, as the apostle fully declares, Phil. 3: 10-14.

Second, Vision is *beatifical*, as it is commonly called, and that not amiss. It gives perfect rest and blessedness unto them in whom it is. This may be a little opened in the ensuing observations.

1. There are continual operations of God in Christ in the souls of them that are glorified, and communications from him unto them. For all creatures must externally live, even in heaven, in dependence on Him who is the eternal fountain of being, life, goodness, and blessedness unto all. As we cannot subsist one moment in our beings, lives, souls, bodies, the inward or outward man, without the continual acting of divine power in us, and towards us; so in the glorified state our all shall depend eternally on divine power and goodness, communicating themselves unto us, for all the ends of our blessed subsistence in heaven.

2. What is the way and manner of these communications, we cannot comprehend. We cannot, indeed, fully understand the nature and way of his spiritual communications unto us in this life. We know these things by their signs, their outward means, and principally by the effects they produce in the real change of our natures; but in themselves we see but little of them. “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we know not whence it cometh, and whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit*,” John 3: 8. All God’s real operations in heaven and earth are

incomprehensible, as being acts of infinite power; and we cannot search them out unto perfection.

3. All communications from the Divine Being and infinite fulness in heaven unto glorified saints, are in and through Christ Jesus, who shall for ever be the medium of communication between God and the church, even in glory. All things being gathered into one head in him, even things in heaven, and things in earth, – that head being in immediate dependence on God, this order shall never be dissolved, Eph. 1: 10, 11; 1 Cor. 3: 23. And on these communications from God through Christ depends entirely our continuance in a state of blessedness and glory. We shall no more be self-subsistent in glory than we are in nature or grace.

4. The way on our part whereby we shall receive these communications from God by Christ, which are the eternal springs of life, peace, joy, and blessedness, is this vision the sight whereof we speak. For, as it is expressly assigned thereunto in the Scripture, so whereas it contains the perfect operation of our minds and souls in a perfect state, on the most perfect object, it is the only means of our blessedness. And this is the true cause whence there neither is nor can be any satiety or weariness in heaven, in the eternal contemplation of the same glory. For not only the object of our sight is absolutely infinite, which can never be searched unto the bottom, yea, is perpetually new unto a finite understanding; but our subjective blessedness consisting in continual fresh communications from the infinite fulness of the divine nature, derived unto us through vision, is always new, and always will be so to eternity. Herein shall all the saints of God drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, be satisfied with his likeness, and refresh themselves in the eternal springs of life, light, and joy for evermore.

This *effect*, – that view, which we have by faith of the glory of Christ in this world, does not produce. It is sanctifying, not glorifying. The best of saints are far from a perfect or glorified state in this life; and that not only on the account of the outward evils which in their persons they are exposed unto, but also of the weakness and imperfection of their inward state in grace. Yet we may observe some things unto the honour of faith in them who have received it.

a) In its due exercise on Christ, it will give unto the souls of believers some *previous participation* of future glory, working in

them dispositions unto, and preparation for, the enjoyment of it.

b) There is no *glory*, no *peace*, no *joy*, no *satisfaction* in this world, to be compared with what we receive by that weak and imperfect view which we have of the glory of Christ by faith; yea, all the joys of the world are a thing of nought in comparison of what we so recede.

c) It is sufficient to give us such a *perception*, such a *foretaste* of future blessedness in the enjoyment of Christ, as may continually stir us up to breathe and pant after it. But it is not beatifical.

Other differences of an alike nature between our beholding of the glory of Christ in this life by faith, and that vision of it which is reserved for heaven, might be insisted on; but I shall proceed no farther. There is nothing farther for us to do herein but that now and always we shut up all our meditations concerning it with the deepest self-abasement, out of a sense of our unworthiness and insufficiency to comprehend those things, admiration of that excellent glory which we cannot comprehend, and vehement longings for that season when we shall see him as he is, be ever with him, and know him even as we are known.

End.

The Glory of Christ: Second Part

P a r t - 2

Meditations And Discourses Concerning The Glory Of Christ;
Applied Unto Unconverted Sinners And Saints Under Spiritual
Decays.

In Two Chapters, From John 17:24.

Original Preface to the Second Part

To The Reader.

The design of this preface is not to commend either the author or the matter contained in this little book. Let every reader do as he finds cause. Nor need any assurance be given that Dr Owen was the author, to any who have conversed with his writings, and will be at the pains to read this over. It is, indeed, his application of the former Discourses upon this subject, printed in the year 1684. But the reason why it was not then added (the omission whereof rendered that book imperfect to judicious readers) seems necessary to be given. Had it pleased God he had lived a little longer, it would have come out as perfect as his other works. But there being no more transcribed in his lifetime than what was then printed, and that published soon after his death, these two chapters, wrote only with his own hand, were found too late to be then added. They are therefore now printed to complete those Discourses. And it is presumed, that as no serious Christian who reads this will be satisfied without the other also, so all who prize the former will be glad of the opportunity to add this thereunto.

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* The Discourses that follow were first printed in 1691, eight years after the death of Dr Owen. This circumstance may explain the absence of the Italics, of which he generally made free use in all his publications. – Ed.

PART II · CHAPTER 1

Application of the Foregoing Meditations concerning the Glory of Christ

First, in an Exhortation unto

such as are not yet Partakers of Him.

That which remains is, to make some application of the glorious truth insisted on unto the souls of them that are concerned; and what I have to offer unto that end I shall distribute under two heads. The first shall be with respect unto them who are yet strangers from this holy and glorious One, – who are not yet made partakers of him, nor have any special interest in him. And the second shall be directed unto believers, as a guide and assistance unto their recovery from spiritual decays, and the revival of a spring of vigorous grace, holiness, and obedience in them.

For the first of these, although it seems not directly to lie in our way, yet is it suited unto the method of the Gospel, that wherever there is a declaration of the excellencies of Christ, in his person, grace, or office, it should be accompanied with an invitation and exhortation unto sinners to come unto him. This method he himself first made use of, Matt. 11: 27-30; John 7: 37, 38, and consecrated it unto our use also. Besides, it is necessary from the nature of the things themselves; for who can dwell on the consideration of the glory of Christ, being called therewith to the declaration of it, but his own mind will engage him to invite lost sinners unto a participation of him? But I shall at present proceed no farther in this exhortation, but only unto the proposal of some of those considerations which may prepare, incline, and dispose their minds unto a closure with him as he is tendered in the Gospels As, -

1. Let them consider well what is their present state with respect unto God and eternity. This Moses wished for the Israelites, Deut.

32: 29, "*Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*" It is the greatest folly in the world to leave the issues of these things unto an uncertain hazard; and that man who cannot prevail with himself strictly to examine what is his state and condition with respect unto eternity, does never do any good nor abstain from any evil in a due manner. Remember, therefore, that "*many are called, but few are chosen.*" To be called, is to enjoy all the outward privileges of the Gospel, – which is all you unto whom I speak can pretend unto; yet this you may do and not be chosen; – even among those unto whom the word is preached, they are but few that shall be saved. In the distribution made by our Lord Jesus Christ of the hearers of the word into four sorts of ground, it was but one of them that received real benefit thereby; and if our congregations are no better than were his hearers, there is not above a fourth part of them that will be saved, – it may be a far less number; – and is it not strange that every one of them is not jealous over himself and his own condition? Many herein deceive themselves until they fall under woeful surprises. And this is represented in the account of the final judgement; for the generality of those who have professed the Gospel are introduced as complaining of their disappointments, Matt. 25: 41-44 [10-12?]. For what is there spoken is only a declaration of what befell them here in the close of their lives, and their personal judgement thereon.

2. Take heed of being deluded by common presumptions. Most men have some thoughts in general about what their state is, and what it will be in the issue; but they make no diligent search into this matter, because a number of common presumptions do immediately insinuate themselves into their minds for their relief; and they are such as all whose force and efficacy unto this end lies in this, that they differ from others, and are better than they; – as that they are Christians, that they are in the right way of religion, that they are partakers of the outward privileges of the Gospel, hearing the word, and participating of the sacraments; – that they have light and convictions, so as that they abstain from sin, and perform duties so as others do not; and the like. All those with whom it is not so, who are behind them in these things, they judge to be in an ill state and condition, whence they entertain good hopes concerning themselves; and this is all that most trust unto. It is not my present business to

discourse the vanity of presumptions; – it has been done by many. I give only this warning in general, unto those who have the least design or purpose to come to Christ, and to be made partakers of him, that they put no trust in them, that they rely not on them; for if they do so they will eternally deceive their souls. This was a great part of the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, Matt. 3: 9, “*Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.*” This was their great comprehensive privilege, containing all the outward church and covenant advantages. These they rested in and trusted to unto their ruin; herein he designed to undeceive them.

3. Consider correctly what it is to live and die without an interest in Christ, without a participation of him. Where this is not stated in the mind, where thoughts of it are not continually prevalent, there can be no one step taken in the way towards him. Unless we are thoroughly convinced that without him we are in a state of apostasy from God, under the curse, obnoxious unto eternal wrath, as some of the worst of God’s enemies, we shall never flee unto him for refuge in a due manner. “*The whole have no need of a physician, but the sick.*” Christ “*came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;*” and the conviction intended is the principal end of the ministry of the law. The miseries of this state have been the subject of innumerable sermons and discourses; but there is a general misery in the whole, that few take themselves to be concerned therein, or apply these things unto themselves. Let us tell men of it a thousand times, yet they either take no notice of it, or believe it not, or look on it as that which belongs unto the way and course of preaching, wherein they are not concerned. These things, it seems, preachers must say; and they may believe them who have a mind whereunto. It is a rare thing that any one shall as much as say unto himself, Is it so with me? And if we now, together with this caution, tell the same men again, that while they are uninterested in Christ, not ingrafted into him by faith, that they run in vain, that all their labour in religion is lost, that their duties are all rejected, that they are under the displeasure and curse of God, that their end is eternal destruction, – which are all unquestionably certain, – yet will they let all these things pass by without any farther consideration.

But here I must fix with them unto whom I speak at present, – unless there be a full conviction in them of the woeful, deplorable

condition of every soul, of whatever quality, profession, religion, outward state it be, who is not yet made partaker of Christ, all that I have farther to add will be of no signification. Remember, then, that the due consideration hereof is unto you, in your state, your chiefest concernment in this world: and be not afraid to take in a full and deep sense of it; for if you are really delivered from it, and have good evidence thereof, it is nothing unto you but matter of eternal praise and thanksgiving. And if you are not so, it is highly necessary that your minds should be possessed with due apprehension of it. The work of this conviction is the first effect of true religion; and the great abuse of religion in the world is, that a pretence of it deludes the minds of men to apprehend that it is not necessary: for to be of this or that religion, — of this or that way in religion, — is supposed sufficient to secure the eternal state of men, though they are never convinced of their lost estate by nature.

4. *Hereon consider the infinite condescension and love of Christ, in his invitations and calls of you to come unto him for life, deliverance, mercy, grace, peace, and eternal salvation.* Multitudes of these invitations and calls are recorded in the Scripture, and they are all of them filled up with those blessed encouragements which divine wisdom knows to be suited unto lost, convinced sinners, in their present state and condition. It were a blessed contemplation, to dwell on the consideration of the infinite condescension, grace, and love of Christ, in his invitations to sinners to come unto him that they may be saved, — of that mixture of wisdom and persuasive grace that is in them, — of the force and efficacy of the pleading and argument that they are accompanied withal, as they are recorded in the Scripture; but that belongs not to my present design. This I shall only say, that in the declaration and preaching of them, Jesus Christ yet stands before sinners, calling, inviting, encouraging them to come unto him.

This is somewhat of the word which he now speaks unto you: Why will ye die? why will ye perish? why will you not have compassion on your own souls? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day of wrath that is approaching? It is but a little while before all your hopes, your reliefs, and presumptions will forsake you, and leave you eternally miserable. *Look unto me, and be saved*; — come unto me, and I will ease you of all sins, sorrows,

fears, burdens, and give rest unto your souls. Come, I entreat you; — lay aside all procrastinations, all delays; — put me off no more; — eternity lies at the door. Cast out all cursed, self-deceiving reserves; — do not so hate me as that you will rather perish than accept deliverance by me.

These and the like things does the Lord Christ continually declare, proclaim, plead, and urge on the souls of sinners; as it is fully declared, Prov. i. 20–33. He does it in the preaching of the word, as if he were present with you, stood amongst you, and spake personally to every one of you. And because this would not suit his present state of glory, he has appointed the ministers of the gospel to appear before you, and to deal with you in his stead, avowing as his own the invitations that are given you in his name, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

Consider therefore, his infinite condescension, grace, and love herein. Why all this towards you? Does he stand in need of you? Have you deserved it at his hands? Did you love him first? Cannot he be happy and blessed without you? Has he any design upon you, that he is so earnest in calling you unto him? Alas! it is nothing but the overflowing of mercy, compassion, and grace, that moves and acts him herein. Here lies the entrance of innumerable souls into a death and condemnation far more severe than those contained in the curse of the law, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. In the contempt of this infinite condescension of Christ in his holy invitation of sinners to himself, lies the sting and poison of unbelief, which unavoidably gives over the souls of men unto eternal ruin. And who shall once pity them to eternity who are guilty of it? Yea, but, —

5. Perhaps, if you should, on his invitation, begin to look to Him, and resolve to come to him, you are greatly afraid that when it comes to the trial he will not receive you; for no heart can conceive, no tongue can express, what wretched, vile, and provoking sinners you have been. That the Lord Christ will receive unto him such as we are, we have no hopes, or that ever we shall find acceptance with him. I say it is not amiss when persons come so far as to be sensible of what discouragements they have to conflict withal, what difficulties lie in their way, and what objections do arise against them; for the most do perish in a senseless stupidity, — they will not consider how it is with them, what is required of them, nor how it will be in the latter end; — they doubt not but that either they do believe already, or can do

so when they please. But when any come so far as to charge the failure of their acceptance with Christ on their own unworthiness, and so are discouraged from coming unto him, there are arguments for their conviction and persuasion, which nothing but the devil and unbelief can defeat. Wherefore, that which is now proposed unto consideration in answer hereunto, is the readiness of Christ to receive every sinner, be he who or what he will, that shall come unto him. And hereof we have the highest evidences that divine wisdom and grace can give unto us. This is the language of the Gospel, of all that the Lord Christ did or suffered, which is recorded therein; – this is the divine testimony of the “three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;” and of the “three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood:” all give their joint testimony, that the Lord Christ is ready to receive all sinners that come to him. They who receive not this testimony make God a liar, – both Father, Son, and Spirit. Whatever the Lord Christ is in the constitution of his person, – in the representation of the Father, – in his office, – in what he did on the earth, – in what he does in heaven, – proclaims the same truth. Nothing but cursed obstinacy in sin and unbelief can suggest a thought unto our minds that he is not willing to receive us when we come unto him. Herein we are to bear testimony against the unbelief of all unto whom the gospel is preached, that come not unto him. Unbelief acting itself herein, includes a contempt of the wisdom of God, a denial of his truth or faithfulness, an impeachment of the sincerity of Christ in his invitations, making him a deceiver, and will issue in an express hatred of his person and office, and of the wisdom of God in him. Here, then, you are shut up, – you cannot from hence take any countenance unto your unbelief.

6. Consider that he is as able to save us as he is ready and willing to receive us. The testimonies which he has given us unto his goodness and love are uncontrollable; and none dare directly to call in question or deny his power. Generally, this is taken for granted by all, that Christ is able to save us if he will; yea, who shall question his ability to save us, though we live in sin and unbelief? And many expect that he will do so, because they believe he can if he will. But indeed Christ has no such power, no such ability: he cannot save unbelieving, impenitent sinners; for this cannot be done without denying himself, acting contrary to his word, and destroying his own

glory. Let none please themselves with such vain imaginations. Christ is able to save all them, and only them, who come to God by him. while you live in sin and unbelief, Christ himself cannot save you; but when it comes to the trial in particular, some are apt to think, that although they will not conclude that Christ cannot save them, yet they do, on various accounts, that they cannot be saved by him. This, therefore, we also give testimony unto in our exhortation to come unto him, – namely, that his power to save those that shall comply with his call is sovereign, uncontrollable, almighty, that nothing can stand in the way of. All things in heaven and earth are committed unto him; – all power is his; – and he will use it unto this end, – namely, the assured salvation of all that come unto him.

7. Consider greatly what has been spoken of the representation of God, and all the holy properties of his nature, in him. Nothing can possibly give us more encouragement to come unto him; for we have manifested that God, who is infinitely wise and glorious, has designed to exert all the holy properties of his nature – his mercy, love, grace, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, and power – in him, in and unto the salvation of them that do believe. Whoever, therefore, comes unto Christ by faith on this representation of the glory of God in him, he ascribes and gives unto God all that glory and honour which he aims at from his creatures; and wherewith he is pleased nothing we can do is equal unto it. Every poor soul that comes by faith unto Christ, gives unto God all that glory which it is his design to manifest and be exalted in; – and what can we do more? There is more glory given unto God by coming unto Christ in believing, than in keeping the whole law; in as much as he has more eminently manifested the holy properties of his nature in the way of salvation by Christ, than in giving of the law. There is therefore no man who, under gospel invitations, refuses to come unto and agree with Christ by believing, but secretly, through the power of darkness, blindness, and unbelief, he hates God, dislikes all his ways, would not have his glory exalted or manifested, choosing rather to die in enmity against him than to give glory to him. Do not deceive yourselves; it is not an indifferent thing, whether you will come in unto Christ upon his invitations or not, – a thing that you may put off from one season unto another: your present refusal of it is as high an act of enmity against God as your nature is capable of.

8. Consider that by coming unto Christ you shall have an interest in all that glory which we have proposed unto you; for Christ will become yours more intimately than your wives and children are yours; and so all his glory is yours also. All are apt to be affected with the good things of their relations, – their grace, their riches, their beauty, their power; for they judge themselves to have an interest in them, by reason of their relation unto them. Christ is nearer to believers than any natural relations are to us whatever; they have therefore an interest in all his glory. And is this a small thing in your eyes, that Christ shall be yours, and all his glory shall be yours, and you shall have the advantage of it unto your eternal blessedness? Is it nothing unto you to continue strangers from, and uninterested in, all this glory? to be left to take your portion in this world, in lusts, and sins, and pleasures, and a few perishing trifles, with eternal ruin in the end, while such durable substance, such riches of glory, are tendered unto you?

Lastly, consider the horrible ingratitude there is in a neglect or refusal to come in to Christ upon his invitation, with the doleful, eternal ruin that will ensue thereon. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”* Impenitent unbelievers under the preaching of the gospel, are the vilest and most ungrateful of all God’s creation. The devils themselves, as wicked as they are, are not guilty of this sin; for Christ is never tendered unto them, – they never had an offer of salvation on faith and repentance. This is their peculiar sin, and will be the peculiar aggravation of their misery unto eternity. *“Hear, ye despisers, wonder, and perish”*. The sin of the devil is in malice and opposition unto knowledge, above what the nature of man is in this world. Men, therefore, must sin in some instance above the devil, or God would not give them their eternal portion with the devil and his angels: – this [sin] is unbelief.

Some, it may be, will say, What then shall we do? what shall we apply ourselves unto? what is it that is required of us?

1. Take the advice of the apostle, Heb. 3: 7, 8, 13, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” This day, even this, is unto you in the tender of grace the acceptable time; – this is the day of salvation. Others have

had this day as well as you, and have missed their opportunity; – take heed lest it should be so with you also. Now if any one should write it down, or peculiarly commit it to remembrance, “This day there was a offer of Christ and salvation in him made unto my soul, – from this time I will resolve to give up myself unto him,” and if you form your resolutions, charge your consciences with what you have engaged, and make yourselves to know that if you go back from it, it is a token that you are going to ruin.

2. Consider that it is high time for you to make somewhat of religion. Do not hang always in suspense; let it not be a question with yourselves, whether you have a mind to be saved or no. This is as good a time and season for a resolution as ever you are like to have while in this world. Some things, nay, many things, may fall in between this and the next opportunity, that shall put you backward, and make your entrance into the kingdom of heaven far more difficult than ever it was; and the living in that uncertainty at best, which you do, of what will become of you unto eternity, is the most miserable kind of life in the world. Those who put far from them the evil day, and live in the pursuit of lusts and pleasures, have somewhat that gives them present satisfaction, and they say not, “*There is no hope,*” because they “*find the life of the hand*” [Isa. 57: 10]; but you have nothing that gives you any prevalent refreshment, neither will your latter end be better than theirs, if you die without an interest in Christ Jesus. Come, therefore, at length, unto a determinate resolution what you will do in this matter. Christ has waited long for you, and who knows how soon he may withdraw, never to look after you any more?

Upon occasion of the preceding Discourse concerning the Glory of Christ, I thought it necessary to add unto it this brief exhortation unto faith in him, aiming to suit it unto the capacity of the poorest sinner that is capable of any self-consideration as unto his eternal welfare. But yet, a little farther to give efficacy unto this exhortation, it will be necessary to remove some of those common and obvious tergiversations that convinced sinners do usually retake themselves unto, to put off a present compliance with the calls of Christ to come unto him; for although it is unbelief alone, acting in the darkness of men’s minds and the obstinacy of their wills, that effectually keeps off sinners from coming unto Christ upon his call, yet it shrouds itself under various pretences, that it may not appear in its own ugly form.

For no sin whereof men can be guilty in this world is of so horrible a nature, and so dreadful an aspect, as is this unbelief, where a clear view of it is obtained in evangelical light. Wherefore, by the aid of Satan, it suggests other pleas and pretences unto the minds of sinners, under which they may countenance themselves in a refusal to come to Christ. See 2 Cor. 4: 4. Any thing else it shall be, but not unbelief; – that they all disavow. I shall therefore speak unto a few of those tergiversations in this case which are obvious, and which are exemplified in the Gospel itself.

First, Some do say, on such exhortations, What is it that you would have us to do? – We hear the word preached, we believe it as well as we can, we do many things willingly, and abstain from many evils diligently; what is more required of us? This is the language of the hearts of the most with whom in this case we have to do. And I say, -

1. It is usual with them who do something in the ways of God, but not all they should, and so nothing in a due manner, to expostulate about requiring of them more than they do. So the people dispute with God himself, Mal. 1: 6, 3: 8, 13. So they in the Gospel who esteemed themselves to have done their duty, being pressed unto faith by Christ Jesus, ask him with some indignation, “*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*” John 6: 28. If what we do be not enough, what is it that you require more of us? So was it with the young man, Matt. 19: 20, “*What lack I yet?*” Be advised, therefore, not to be too confident of your state, lest you should yet lack that one thing, the want whereof might prove your eternal ruin.

2. The things mentioned, with all of the like nature, which may be multiplied, may be where there is no one spark of saving faith. Simon Magus heard the word, and believed as well as he could; – Herod heard it, and did many things gladly; – and all sorts of hypocrites do upon their convictions perform many duties, and abstain from many sins: so as that, notwithstanding this plea, you may perish for ever.

3. Where these things are sincere, they belong unto the exercise of faith; they may be after a sort without faith, but faith cannot be without them. But there is a fundamental act of faith, whereby we agree with Christ, whereby we receive him, that is, in order of nature, antecedent unto its acting in all other duties and occasions; – it is laying the foundation; other things belong to the building.

This is that you are called on to secure; and you may know it by these two properties: -

a) It is singular. So our Saviour tells the Jews, John 6: 29, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.*”. The act, work, or duty of faith, in the receiving of Christ, is a peculiar, singular work, wherein the soul yields special obedience unto God; – it is not to be reckoned unto such common duties as those mentioned, but the soul must find out wherein it has in a singular manner reconciled with Christ upon the command of God.

b). It is accompanied with a universal spiritual change in the whole soul, 2 Cor. 5: 17, “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” Wherefore, if you would not choose rather to deceive and ruin your own souls, come to the trial whether indeed you have received Christ in such a singular, transforming act of faith: do not on such pretences want a compliance with the word of exhortation proposed unto you. But, -

Secondly, Some will say, they know not how to proceed in this work. They can make nothing of it; they have tried to come to this believing, but do still fail in what they design; they go on and off, but can make no progress, can come to no satisfaction; therefore they think it best to let things go in general as they are, without putting themselves to farther trouble, as unto any especial act of faith in the receiving of Christ. This is the language of men’s hearts (though not of their mouths) another shelter of unbelief, – and they act accordingly; they have a secret despondency, which keeps them safe from attempting a real closure with Christ on the offer of the Gospel. Something may be offered unto this distempered frame of mind.

1. Remember the disciples that were fishing, and had toiled all night, but caught nothing, Luke 5: 3, 4. Upon the coming of Christ unto them, he requires that they should cast out their nets once more; Peter makes some excuse, from the labour which they had taken in vain all night; however, he would venture once more, on the command of Christ, and had an astonishing draught of fishes, verses 5-9. Have you been wearied with disappointments in your attempts and resolutions? Yet cast in your net this once more, upon the command of Christ, – venture this once more to come unto him on his call and invitation; you know not what success he may give unto you.

2. Consider that it is not failing in this or that attempt of coming to Christ, but a giving over your endeavours, that will be your ruin.

The woman of Canaan, in her great outcry to Christ for mercy, Matt. 15: 22, had many a repulse. First, it is said, he answered her not a word; then his disciples desired that he would send her away, that she might not trouble him any more; whereon he gives a reason why he would not regard her, or why he could justly pass her by; she was not an Israelitess, unto whom he was sent; – yet she gives not up, but pressing into his presence, cries out for mercy, verse 25. Being come to that issue, to try and draw out her faith to the utmost, which was his design from the beginning, he reckons her among dogs, that were not to have children's bread given unto them. Had she now at last given up upon this severe rebuke, she had never obtained mercy; but persisting in her request, she at last prevailed, verses 27, 28. It may be you have prayed, and cried, and resolved, and vowed, but all without success, as you suppose; sin has broken through all: however, if you give not up, you shall prevail at last; you know not at what time God will come in with his grace, and Christ will manifest his love unto you as unto the poor woman, after many a rebuke. It may be, after all, he will do it today; and if not, he may do it another: do not despond. Take that word of Christ himself for your encouragement, Prov. 8: 34, "*Blessed is the man that hearth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*" If you hear him, and wait, though you have not yet admission, but are kept at the gates and posts of the doors, yet in the issue you shall be blessed.

3. The rule in this case is, Hos. 6:3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know." Are you in the way of knowing Christ in the use of means, hearing the word, and sincere endeavours in holy duties? Though you cannot yet attain unto any evidence that you have received him, have settled with him, nothing can ruin you but giving over the way wherein you are; for then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord. Many can give you their experiences, that if they had been discouraged by present overwhelming difficulties, arising from their disappointments, breaking of vows, relapses into folly, they had been utterly ruined; whereas now they are at rest and peace in the bosom of Christ. On a great surprisal, Christ lost at once many disciples, and they lost their souls, John vi. 66, "*They went*

back, and walked no more with him.” Take heed of the like discouragements.

Thirdly, Some may say, yea, practically they do say, that these things indeed are necessary; they must come to Christ by believing, or they are undone; but this is not the season of it, – there will be time enough to apply themselves unto it when other occasions are past. At present they have not leisure to enter upon and go through with this duty; wherefore they will abide in their present state for a while, hearing and doing many things, and when time serves, will apply themselves unto this duty also.

1. This is an uncontrollable evidence of that stupidity and folly which is come upon our nature by sin, – a depravation that the apostle places in the head of the evils of corrupted nature, Tit. 3: 1-3. Can any thing be more foolish, senseless, and stupid, than for men to put off the consideration of the eternal concernment of their souls for one hour, being altogether uncertain whether they shall live another or not? – to prefer present trifles before the blessedness or misery of an immortal state? For those who never heard of these things, who never had any conviction of sin and judgement, to put the evil day far from them, is not much to be admired; but for you who have Christ preached unto you, who own a necessity of coming unto him, to put it off from day to day upon such slight pretences, – it is an astonishing folly! May you not be spoken unto in the language of the Wisdom of God, Prov. 6: 9-11. You come to hear the word, and when you go away, the language of your hearts is, “*Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;*” we will abide a little while in our present state, and afterward we will rouse up ourselves. Under this deceit do multitudes perish every day. This is a dark shade, wherein cursed unbelief lies hid.

2. Consider that this is the greatest engine that Satan makes use of in the world among them that hear the word preached unto them, for the ruin of their souls. He has other arts, and ways, and methods of dealing with other men, – as by sensual and worldly lusts; but as unto them who, through their convictions, do attend unto the preaching of the word, this is his great and almost only engine for their ruin: There needs no haste in this matter, – another time will be more seasonable, – you may be sure not to fail of it before you die;

however, this present day and time is most unfit for it, – you have other things to do, – you cannot part with your present frame, – you may come again to hear the word the next opportunity. Know assuredly, if your minds are influenced unto *delays of coming to Christ* by such insinuations, you are under the power of Satan, and he is like enough to hold you fast unto destruction.

3. *This is as evil and dangerous a posture or frame of mind as you can well fall under.* If you have learned to put off God, and Christ, and the word for the present season, and yet relieve yourselves in this, that you do not intend, like others, always to reject them, but will have a time to hearken to their calls, you are secured and fortified against all convictions and persuasions, all fears; one answer will serve for all, – within a little while you will do all that can be required of you. This is that which ruins the souls of multitudes every day. It is better dealing with men openly degenerate, than with such a trifling promiser. See Isa. 5: 7, 10.

4. *Remember that the Scripture confines you unto the present day, without the least intimation that you shall have either another day,* or another tender of grace and mercy in any day, 2 Cor. 6: 2; Heb. 3: 7, 13; 12: 15. Take care lest you come short of the grace of God, miss of it by missing your opportunity. Redeem the time, or you are lost for ever.

5. *As unto the pretence of your opportunity and business, there is a ready way to disappoint the craft of Satan in that pretence,* – namely, to mix thoughts of Christ and the renovation of your resolutions either to come or to cleave unto him with all your opportunities. Let nothing put it utterly out of your minds; make it familiar unto you, and you will beat Satan out of that stronghold, Prov. 7: 4. However, shake yourselves out of this dust, or destruction lies at the door.

Fourthly, It is the language of the hearts of some, that if they give up themselves unto a compliance with this exhortation, and go seriously about this duty, they must relinquish and renounce all their lusts and pleasures; yea, much of their converse and society, wherein they find so much present satisfaction, as that they know not how to part with them. If they might retain their old ways, at least some of them, it were another matter; but this total relinquishment of all is very severe.

1. The Jesuits, preaching and painting of Christ among some of the Indians, concealed from them his cross and sufferings, telling them only of his present glory and power; so as they pretended to win them over to faith in him, hiding from them that whereby they might be discouraged; and so preached a false Christ unto them, one of their own framing. We dare do no such thing for all the world; we can here use no condescension, no compliance, no composition with respect unto any sin or lust; we have no commission to grant that request of Lot, “*Is it not a little one? let it be spared;*” nor to come to Naaman’s terms, “*God be merciful to me in this thing; in all others I will be obedient.*” Wherefore, -

2. We must here be peremptory with you, whatever be the event; if you are discouraged by it, we cannot help it. Cursed be the man that shall encourage you to come to Christ with hopes of indulgence unto any one sin whatever. I speak not this as though you could at once absolutely and perfectly leave all sin, in the root and branches of it; but only you are to do it in heart and resolution, engaging unto a universal mortification of all sin, as by grace from above you shall be enabled; but your choice must be absolute, without reserves, as to love, interest, and design; – God or the world, – Christ or Belial, – holiness or sin; there is no medium, no terms of composition, 2 Cor. 6: 15-18.

As unto what you pretend of your pleasures, the truth is, you never yet had any real pleasure, nor do know what it is. How easy were it to declare the folly, vanity, bitterness, poison of those things which you have esteemed your pleasures! Here alone – namely, in Christ, and a participation of him – are true pleasures and durable riches to be obtained; pleasure of the same nature with, and such as, like pleasant streams, flow down into the ocean of eternal pleasures above. A few moments in these joys are to be preferred above the longest continuance in the cursed pleasures of this world. See Prov. 3: 13-18.

Fifthly, It will be said by some, that they do not see those who profess themselves to be believers, to be so much better than they are, as that you need to press us so earnestly to so great a change; we know not why we should not be accounted believers already, as well as they. I shall in a few words, as well as I am able, lay this

stumbling-block out of the way, though I confess, at this day, it is weighty and cumbersome. And I say, -

1. Among them that profess themselves to be believers, there are many false, corrupt hypocrites; and it is no wonder that on various occasions they lay the stumbling-block of their iniquities before the faces of others; but they shall bear their own burden and judgement.

2. It is acknowledged, it must be bewailed, that some whom we have reason to judge to be true believers, yet, through their unfortified pride, or covetousness, or carelessness in their conversation, or vain attire and conformity to the world, or forwardness, do give just occasion of offence. We confess that God is displeased herewith, Christ and the Gospel dishonoured, and many that are weak are wounded, and others discouraged. But as for you, this is not your rule, - this is not proposed unto you; but that word only is so that will never fail you.

3. The world does not know, nor is able to make a right judgement of believers; nor do you so, for it is the spiritual man alone that discerns the things of God. Their infirmities are visible to all, - their graces invisible; the King 's daughter is glorious within. And when you are able to make a right judgement of them, you will desire no greater advancement than to be of their society, Ps. 16: 3. These few instances of the pretences wherewith unbelief covers its deformity, and hides that destruction wherewith it is accompanied, may suffice unto our present purpose; they are multiplied in the minds of men, impregnated by the suggestions of Satan on their darkness and folly. A little spiritual wisdom will rend the veil of them all, and expose unbelief acting in enmity against Christ under them. But what has been spoken may suffice to answer the necessity of the preceding exhortation on this occasion.

PART II • CHAPTER 2

The Way and Means of the Recovery of Spiritual Decays, and of Obtaining Fresh Springs of Grace

The Way and Means of the Recovery of Spiritual Decays, and of Obtaining Fresh Springs of Grace.

The application of the same truth, in the second place, belongs unto believers, especially such as have made any long profession of walking in the ways of God and the gospel. And that which I design herein, is to manifest, that a steady spiritual view of the glory of Christ by faith, will give them a gracious revival from inward decays, and fresh springs of grace, even in their latter days. A truth this is, as we shall see, confirmed by Scripture, with the joyful experience of multitudes of believers, and is of great importance unto all that are so.

There are two things which those who, after a long profession of the gospel, are entering into the confines of eternity do long for and desire. The one is, that all their breaches may be repaired, their decays recovered, their backsliding healed; for unto these things they have been more or less obnoxious in the course of their walking before God. The other is, that they may have fresh springs of spiritual life, and vigorous acting of all divine graces, in spiritual-mindedness, holiness, and fruitfulness, unto the praise of God, the honour of the gospel, and the increase of their own peace and joy. These things they value more than all the world, and all that is in it; about these things are their thoughts and contrivances exercised night and day. Those with whom it is otherwise, whatever they pretend, are in the dark unto themselves and their own condition; for it is in the nature of this grace to grow and increase unto the end. As rivers, the nearer they come unto the ocean whither they tend, the more they increase their waters, and speed their streams; so will grace flow more freely and fully in its

near approaches to the ocean of glory. That is not saving which does not so.

An experience hereof – I mean of the thriving of grace towards the end of our course – is that alone which can support us under the troubles and temptations of life, which we have to conflict withal. So the apostle tells us, that this is our great relief in all our distresses and afflictions, *“for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,”* 2 Cor. 4: 16. If it be so, that in the daily decays of the outward man, in all the approaches of its dissolution, we have inward spiritual revivals and renovation, we shall not faint in what we undergo. And without such continual renovations, we shall faint in our distresses, whatever other things we may have, or whatever we pretend unto the contrary.

And ordinarily it is so, in the holy, wise providence of God, that afflictions and troubles increase with age. It is so, in an especial manner, with ministers of the gospel; they have many of them a share in the lot of Peter, which our Lord Jesus Christ declared unto him, John 21: 18, *“When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.”* Besides those natural disorders and infirmities which accompany the decays of life, troubles of life, and in their affairs, do usually grow upon them, when they look for nothing less, but were ready to say with Job, *“We shall die in our nest,”* Job 29: 18. So was it with Jacob, after all his hard labour and travail to provide for his family, such things fell out in it in his old age as had almost broken his heart. And often times both persecutions and public dangers do befall them at the same season. while the outward man is thus perishing, we need great support, that we faint not. And this is only to be had in an experience of daily spiritual renovations in the inner man.

The excellency of this mercy the Psalmist expresses in a heavenly manner, Ps. 92: 12-15, *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”*

The promise in the 12th verse respects the times of the Messiah, or of the New Testament; for so it is prophesied of him, "*In his days the righteous shall flourish*," Ps. 72: 7, – namely, through the abundance of grace that should be administered from his fulness, as John 1: 16; Col. 1: 19. And herein consists the glory of the gospel, and not in outward prosperity or external ornaments of divine worship. The flourishing of the righteous, I say, in grace and holiness is the glory of the office of Christ and of the gospel. Where this is not, there is no glory in the profession of our religion. The glory of kings is in the wealth and peace of their subjects; and the glory of Christ is in the grace and holiness of his subjects.

This flourishing is compared to the palm-tree, and the growth of the cedar. The palm-tree is of the greatest verdure, beauty, and fruitfulness, and the cedar of the greatest and longest growth of any trees. So are the righteous compared to the palm tree for the beauty of profession and fruitfulness in obedience; and unto the cedar for a continual, constant growth and increase in grace. Thus it is with all that are righteous, unless it be from their own sinful neglect, as it is with many in this day. They are hereon rather like the shrubs and heaths in the wilderness, which see not when good comes, than like the palm-tree or the cedars of Lebanon. And hereby do men what lies in them to obscure the glory of Christ and his kingdom, as well as disquiet their own souls.

The words that follow, verse 13, "*Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God*," are not distinctive of some from other, as though some only of the nourishing righteous were so planted; but they are descriptive of them all, with an addition of the way and means whereby they are caused so to grow and flourish. And this is, their implantation in the house of the Lord; – that is, in the church, which is the seat of all the means of spiritual life, both as unto growth and flourishing, which God is pleased to grant unto believers. To be planted in the house of the Lord, is to be fixed and rooted in the grace communicated by the ordinances of divine worship. Unless we are planted in the house of the Lord, we cannot flourish in his courts. See Ps. 1: 3. Unless we are partakers of the grace administered in the ordinances, we cannot flourish in a fruitful profession. The outward participation of them is common unto hypocrites, that bear some leaves, but neither grow like the cedar

nor bear fruit like the palm-tree. So the apostle prays for believers, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they may be “*rooted and grounded in love*,” Eph. 3: 17, – “*rooted, built up, and established*,” Col. 2: 7. The want hereof is the cause that we have so many fruitless professors; they have entered the courts of God by profession, but were never planted in his house by faith and love. Let us not deceive ourselves herein; – we may be entered into the church, and made partakers of the outward privileges of it, and not be so planted in it as to flourish in grace and fruitfulness.

That which on this occasion I principally intend, is the grace and privilege expressed, verse 14, “*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing*.” There be three things which constitute a spiritual state, or belong to the life of God. **1.** That believers be fat; that is, by the heavenly juice, sap, or fatness of the true olive, of Christ himself, as Rom. 11: 17. This is the principle of spiritual life and grace derived from him. When this abounds in them, so as to give them strength and vigour in the exercise of grace, to keep them from decays and withering, they are said to be fat; which, in the Scripture phrase, is strong and healthy. **2.** That they flourish in the greenness (as the word is) and verdure of profession; for vigorous grace will produce a flourishing profession. **3.** That they still bring forth fruit in all duties of holy obedience. All these are promised unto them even in old age.

Even trees, when they grow old (the palm and the cedar), are apt to lose of their juice and verdure: and men in old age are subject unto all sorts of decays, both outward and inward. It is a rare thing to see a man in old age naturally vigorous, healthy, and strong; and would it were not more rare to see any spiritually so at the same season! But this is here promised unto believers as an especial grace and privilege, beyond what can be represented in the growth or fruit-bearing of plants and trees.

The grace intended is, that when believers are under all sorts of bodily and natural decays, and, it may be, have been overtaken with spiritual decays also, there is provision made in the covenant to render them fat, flourishing, and fruitful, – vigorous in the power of internal grace, and flourishing in the expression of it in all duties of obedience; which is that which we now inquire after.

Blessed be God for this good word of his grace, that he has given us

such encouragement against all the decays and temptations of old age which we have to conflict withal!

And the Psalmist, in the next words, declares the greatness of this privilege: *“To show that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”* Consider the oppositions that lie against the flourishing of believers in old age, the difficulties of it, the temptations that must be conquered, the acting of the mind above its natural abilities which are decayed the weariness that is apt to befall us in a long spiritual conflict, the cries of the flesh to be spared, and we shall see it to be an evidence of the faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God in covenant; – nothing else could produce this mighty effect. So the prophet, treating of the same promise, Hos. 14: 4-8, closes his discourse with that blessed remark, verse 9, *“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them.”* Spiritual wisdom will make us to see that the faithfulness and power of God are exerted in this work of preserving believers flourishing and fruitful unto the end.

Having laid the foundation of this illustrious testimony, I shall farther declare and confirm my intention, so to make way for the application of the truth under consideration unto this case, – manifesting that the way whereby we may be made partakers of this grace, is by a steady view of the glory of Christ, as proposed to us in the Gospel.

There is a latter spring in the year, a spring in autumn; it is, indeed, for the most part, but faint and weak, – yet is it such as the husbandman cannot spare. And it is an evident sign of barren ground, when it does not put forth afresh towards the end of the year. God, the good husband man, looks for the same from us, especially if we had a summer ’s drought in spiritual decays; as the Psalmist complains, Ps. 32: 4. Had we not had a latter spring the last year, the land had greatly suffered under the drought of the summer. And if we have had such a drought in the course of our profession by spiritual decays, as God, the good husbandman, looks for a latter spring in us, even in old age, in the vigorous acting of grace and fruitful obedience; so without it we can neither have peace nor joy in our own souls. If a man, therefore, has made a great appearance of religion in his former or younger days, and when he is growing into age becomes dead, cold,

worldly, selfish, – if he have no fresh springs of spiritual life in him, it is an evidence that he has a barren heart, that was never really fruitful to God. I know that many stand in need of being excited by such warning unto a diligent consideration of their state and condition.

It is true, that the latter spring does not bring forth the same fruit with the former. There is no more required in it but that the ground evidence itself to be in good heart, and put forth that which is proper unto the season. It may be, such graces as were active and vigorous in men at their first conversion unto God, as were carried in a stream of warm, natural affections, may not so eminently abound in the latter spring of old age; but those which are proper for the season – as namely, spirituality, heavenly-mindedness, weaned from the world, readiness for the cross and death – are necessary, even in old age, to evidence that we have a living principle of grace, and to show thereby that God is upright; He is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

What is farther to be insisted one shall be reduced unto these four heads: -

I. That the constitution of spiritual life is such as is meet to thrive, grow, and increase unto the end, and will do so, unless it be from the default of them in whom it is.

II. That notwithstanding this nature and constitution of spiritual life, yet believers are subject unto many decays, partly gradual, and partly by surprises in temptation, whereby the growth of it is obstructed, unto the dishonour of the gospel and the loss of their own peace with joy.

III. I shall show that such at present is the condition of many professors, – namely that they are visibly fallen under spiritual decays, and do not evidence any interest in the blessed promise insisted on.

IV. On the confirmation of these things, our inquiry will be, how such persons may be delivered from such decays, and by what means they may obtain the grace here promised, of spiritual flourishing in old age, both in the strengthening of the inward principle of life and abounding in fruits of obedience, which are to the praise of God by Jesus Christ; and then we shall make application unto this case of that truth which is the subject of the preceding discourse.

I. The constitution of spiritual life is such as is fitting to grow and increase unto the end. Hereby it does distinguish itself from that faith which is temporary; for there is a temporary faith, which will both flourish for a season and bring forth some fruit; but it is not in its nature and constitution to abide, to grow and increase, but rather to decay and wither. It is described by our Lord Jesus Christ, Matt. 13: 20, 21. Either some great temptation extinguishes it, or it decays unawares, until the mind wherein it was does manifest itself to be utterly barren. And, therefore, whoever is sensible of any spiritual decays, he is called unto a severe trial and examination of himself, as unto the nature of the principle of his profession and obedience; for such decays do rather argue a principle of temporary faith only, unto which they are proper and natural, than that whose nature it is to thrive and grow to the end, whereon those that have it shall, as it is in the promise, still bring forth fruit, and, without their own great guilt, be always freed from such decays.

That this spiritual life is in its nature and constitution such as will abide, thrive, and grow to the end, is three ways testified unto in the Scripture.

1. In that it is compared unto things of the most infallible increase and progress; for besides that its growth is frequently likened unto that of plants and trees well watered, and in a fruitful soil, which fail not to spring, unless it be from some external violence; it is likewise compared unto such things as whose progress is absolutely infallible, Prov. 4: 18, "*The path of the just is, as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*" The path of the just is his covenant-walk before God, as it is frequently called in the Scripture, Ps. 119: 35, 105; Isa. 26: 7; Ps. 23: 3; Matt. 3: 3; Heb. 12: 13; and it comprises the principle, profession, and fruits of it. This, saith the wise man, is as the shining light; that is, the morning light. And wherein is it so? Why, as that goes on by degrees, and shines more and more unto the high noon (though it may be interrupted sometimes by clouds and storms); so is this path of the just, – it goes on and increases unto the high noon, the perfect day of glory. It is in its nature so to do, though it may sometimes meet with obstructions, as we shall see afterward; and so does the morning light also.

There is no visible difference, as unto light, between the light of the morning and the light of the evening; yea, this latter sometimes, from gleams of the setting sun, seems to be more glorious than the other. But herein they differ: the first goes on gradually unto more light, until it comes to perfection; the other gradually gives place unto darkness, until it comes to be midnight. So is it as unto the light of the just and of the hypocrite, and so is it as unto their paths. At first setting out they may seem alike and equal; yea, convictions and spiritual gifts acted with corrupt ends in some hypocrites, may for a time give a greater lustre of profession than the grace of others sincerely converted unto God may attain unto. But herein they discover their different natures: the one increases and goes on constantly, though it may be sometimes but faintly; the other decays, grows dim, gives place to darkness and crooked walking.

This, then, is the nature of the path of the just; and where it is otherwise with us in our walk before God, we can have no evidence that we are in that path, or that we have a living, growing principle of spiritual life in us. And it is fit that professors of all sorts should be minded of these things; for we may see not a few of them under visible decays, without any sincere endeavours after a recovery, who yet please themselves that the root of the matter is in them. It is so, if love of the world, conformity unto it, negligence in holy duties, and coldness in spiritual love, be an evidence of such decays. But let none deceive their own souls; wherever there is a living principle of grace, it will be thriving and growing unto the end. And if it fall under obstructions, and thereby into decays for a season, it will give no rest or quietness unto the soul wherein it is, but will labour continually for a recovery. Peace in a spiritually-decaying condition, is a soul-ruining security; better be under terror on the account of surprise into some sin, than be in peace under evident decays of spiritual life.

And, by the way, this comparing of the path of the just unto the morning light minds me of what I have seen more than once. That light has sometimes cheerfully appeared unto the world, when, after a little season, by reason of clouds, tempests, and storms, it has given place again to darkness, like that of the night; but it has not so been lost and buried like the evening light. After a while it has recovered itself unto a greater lustre than before, manifesting that it increased in itself while it was eclipsed as to us. So has it been with not a few at

their first conversion unto God: great darkness and trouble have, by the efficacy of temptation and injections of Satan, possessed their minds; but the grace which they have receded, being as the morning light, has after a while disentangled itself, and given evidence that it was so far from being extinguished, as that it grew and thrived under all those clouds and darkness; for the light of the just does in the issue always increase by temptations, as that of the hypocrite is constantly impaired by them.

Again, as it is as the morning light, than which nothing has a more assured progress; so it is called by our Saviour “*living water*,” John 4: 10, yea, “*a well of water, springing up into everlasting life*,” verse 14. It is an unceasing spring, – not a pool or pond, though never so large, which may be dried up. Many such pools of light, gifts, and profession, have we seen utterly dried up, when they have come into age, or been ensnared by the temptations of the world. And we may see others every day under dangerous decays; their countenances are changed, and they have lost that oil which makes the face of a believer to shine, – namely, the oil of love, meekness, self denial, and spirituality of converse; and instead thereof, there is spread upon them the odious ointment of pride, self-love, earthly-mindedness, which increases on them more and more. But where this principle of spiritual life is, it is as the morning light, as an unceasing spring that never fails, nor can do so, until it issue in eternal life. And sundry other ways there are whereby the same truth is asserted in the Scripture.

2. There are sundry divine promises given unto believers that so it shall be, or to secure them of such supplies of grace as shall cause their spiritual life to grow, increase, and flourish unto the end; such as that in the psalm which we have considered. For these promises are the means whereby this spiritual life is originally communicated unto us, and whereby it is preserved in us; by them are we made partakers of this divine nature, 2 Pet. 1: 4; and through them is it continued in us. Now [as to] promises of this nature, – namely, that by the dispensation of the Spirit of Christ, and supplies of his grace, our spiritual life shall flourish, and be made fruitful to the end, – I shall briefly call over one of them only at present, which is recorded, Isa. 44: 3, 4, “*I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing*

upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses."

Although this promise may have respect unto the gracious dealing of God with the people of the Jews after their return from the captivity, yet has it so only as it was typical of the redemption of the church by Jesus Christ; but it belongs properly to the times of the gospel, when the righteous were to flourish, and it is a promise of the new covenant, as is manifest in that it is not only given unto believers, but is also extended unto their seed and offspring; which is an assured signature of new covenant promises. And here is, – **1.** A supposition of what we are in ourselves, both before and after our conversion unto God, – namely, as thirsty, dry, and barren ground. We have nothing in ourselves, no radical moisture to make us flourishing and fruitful. And as it is before, so it is after conversion: *"We are not sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God,"* 2 Cor. 3: 5. Being left to ourselves, we should utterly wither and perish. But, – **2.** Here is the blessed relief which God in this case has provided; he will pour the sanctifying water of his Spirit and the blessing of his grace upon us. And this he will so do as to cause us to spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. There is nothing of a more eminent and almost visible growth than willows by the water-courses. Such shall be the spiritual growth of believers under the influences of these promises; that is, they shall be fat and flourishing, and still bring forth fruit. And other promises of the same nature there are many; but we must observe three things concerning them, that we may be satisfied in their accomplishment. As, –

a) The promises of the new covenant, as unto the first communication of grace unto the elect, are absolute and unconditional; they are the executive conveyances of God's immutable purposes and decrees. And what should be the condition of the communication of the first grace unto us? Nothing that is not grace can be so. If it be said that this also is of God in us, which is the condition of the communication of the first saving grace unto us, then I would know whether that be bestowed upon us without any condition. If it be, then that is the first grace, as being absolutely free; if it be not, then what is the condition whereon it is bestowed? concerning which the same inquiry must be made, – and so for ever. But this is the glory of covenant promises, that, as unto the

communication of the grace of conversion and sanctification unto the elect, they are absolutely free and unconditional. But, -

b) The promises which respect the growth, degrees, and measures of this grace in believers are not so. There are many duties required of us, that these promises may be accomplished towards us and in us; yea, watchful diligence in universal gospel obedience is expected from us unto this end. See 2 Pet. 1: 4-10. This is the ordinary method of the communication of all supplies of grace to make us spiritually flourish and be fruitful, – namely, that we be found in the diligent exercise of what we have received. God does sometimes deal otherwise, in a way of sovereignty, and surpriseth men with healing grace in the midst of their decays and backsliding; as Isa. 57: 17, 18. So has many a poor soul been delivered from going down into the pit. The good shepherd will go out of his way to save a wandering sheep; but this is the ordinary method.

c) Notwithstanding these blessed promises of growth, flourishing, and fruitfulness, if we are negligent in the due improvement of the grace which we have received, and the discharge of the duties required of us, we may fall into decays, and be kept in a low, unthrifty state all our days. And this is the principal ground of the discrepancy between the glory and beauty of the church, as represented in the promises of the Gospel, and as exemplified in the lives and walking of professors, – they do not live up unto the condition of their accomplishment in them; howbeit, in God 's way and time they shall be all fulfilled. We have, therefore, innumerable blessed promises concerning the thriving, growing, and flourishing of the principle of spiritual life in us, even in old age and until death; but the grace promised unto this end will not befall us while we are asleep in spiritual sloth and security. Fervent prayer, the exercise of all grace received, with watchfulness unto all holy duties, are required hereunto.

3. God has secured the growth of this spiritual life, by the provision of food for it, whereby it may be strengthened and increased; for life must be preserved by food. And this in our case is the Word of God, with all other ordinances of divine worship which depend thereon, 1 Pet. 2: 2, 3. Whatever the state of this life be, – whether in its beginning, its progress, its decays, – there is suitable nourishment provided for it in the good Word of God 's grace. If men

will neglect their daily food that is provided for them, it is no wonder if they be weak and thriftless. And if believers are not earnest in their desires after this food, – if they are not diligent in providing of it, attending unto it, – much more if, through corruptions and temptations, they count it, in the preaching of it, light and common food, which they do not value, – it is no wonder if they fall into spiritual decays; but God has herein provided for our growth even unto old age.

And this is the first thing which was proposed unto confirmation, namely, that the constitution and nature of spiritual life is such as to be in deficient, so as to thrive and grow even in old age, and unto the end.

II. The second thing proposed is, that notwithstanding all this provision for the growth of spiritual life in us, believers, especially in a long course of profession, are subject to decays, such as may cast them into great perplexities, and endanger their eternal ruin.

And these spiritual decays are of two sorts: 1. Such as are gradual and universal, in the loss of the vigour and life of grace, both in its principle and in its excellence. 2. Such as are occasioned by surprisal into sin through the power of temptation; I mean such sins as do waste the spiritual powers of the soul, and deprive it of all solid peace.

As for temporary believers, give them but time enough in this world, especially if it be accompanied with outward prosperity or persecution; and, for the most part, their decays of one sort or another will make a discovery of their hypocrisy. Though they retain a form of godliness, they deny the power of it, Prov. 1: 31; 2 Tim. 3: 5. And if they do not openly relinquish all duties of religion, yet they will grow so lifeless and savourless in them, as shall evidence their condition; for so it is with them who are lukewarm, who are neither hot nor cold, who have a name to live, but are dead.

And herein lies a notable difference in this matter between sincere believers and those who believe only for a time; for those of the latter sort do either not perceive their sickness and decays, – their minds being taken up and possessed with other things, – or if they do find that it is not with them as it has been formerly, they are not much concerned, and on any occasional new conviction they cry, “*Yet a*

little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep;" but when the other do find any thing of this nature, it makes them restless for a recovery. And although, through the many snares, temptations, and deceits of sin, or through their ignorance of the right way for their healing, they do not many of them obtain a speedy recovery, yet none of them do approve themselves in such a condition, or turn unto any undue reliefs.

Now, that believers are subject to decays in both the ways mentioned, we have full testimony in Scripture; for as unto that general, gradual decay, in the loss of our first faith, love, and works, in the weakening of the internal principle of spiritual life, with the loss thereon of delight, joy, and consolation, and the abatement of the fruits of obedience, our Lord Jesus Christ does expressly charge it on five of the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 2, 3. And in some of them, as Sardis and Laodicea, those decays had proceeded unto such a degree, as that they were in danger of utter rejection. And hereunto answers the experience of all churches and all believers in the world. Those who are otherwise minded are dead in sin, and have got pretences to countenance themselves in their miserable condition. So is it with the Church of Rome; and I wish others did not in some measure follow them therein.

And as unto those of the second sort, whereinto men are cast by surprises and temptations, producing great spiritual distress and anguish of soul, under a sense of God's displeasure, we have an instance in David, as he gives us an account of himself, Ps. 38: 1-10, *"O Lord, thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness,"* &c

It is certain that here is a description of a very woeful state and condition; and the Psalmist, knowing that he was called of God to be a teacher and instructor of the church in all ages, records his own experience unto that end. Hence the title of it is, *"A Psalm to bring to remembrance."* Some judge that David had respect unto some great and sore disease that he was then visited withal. But if it were so, it was only an occasion of his complaint; the cause of it was sin alone. And four things he does represent. **1.** That he had departed from God,

and fallen into provoking sins, which had produced great distresses in his mind, verses 3, 4. **2.** That he had foolishly continued in that state, not making timely application to grace and mercy for healing, whereby it was grown deplorable, verse 5. And this folly is that alone which makes such a condition dangerous, – namely, when men, on their surprisings in sin, do not speedily apply themselves unto healing remedies. **3.** That he had herein a continual sense of the displeasure of God by reason of sin, verses 2-4. **4.** That he was altogether restless in this state, mourning, groaning, labouring continually for deliverance.

This is a clearer delineation of the condition of believers, when, either by the greatness of any sin, or by a long continuance in an evil and a careless frame, they are cast under a sense of divine displeasure. This opens their minds and their hearts, declaring how all things are within, which they cannot deny. It is not so with many, in the same measures and degrees, as it was with David, whose falls were very great; but the substance of it is found in them all. And herein the heart knows its own bitterness; a stranger intermeddles not with it: none knows the groaning and labouring of a soul convinced of such spiritual decays, but he alone in whom they are. Hereon is it cast down to the earth, going mourning all the day long, though others know nothing of its sorrows: but it is of a far more sad consideration, to see men manifesting their inward decays by their outward fruits, and yet are little or not at all concerned therein. The former are in ways of recovery; these in the paths that go down to the chambers of death.

I suppose, therefore, I may take it for granted, that there are few professors of religion, who have had any long continuance in the ways of it, having withal been exposed unto the temptations of life, and much exercised with the occasions of it, but that they have been asleep in their days, as the spouse complains of herself, Song of Solomon 5: 2; that is, they have been overtaken with decays of one sort or another, either with respect unto spiritual or moral duties, – in their relation unto churches or families, in their judgements or their affections, in their inward frames or outward actions, they have been overtaken with the effects of sloth, negligence, or the want of a continual watch in the life of faith. I wish it were otherwise.

I principally herein intend those gradual declensions in the life and power of grace which men in a long course of profession are

subject unto. And these for the most part proceed from formality in holy duties, under the constant outward performance of them; vehement engagements in the affairs of life, an over valuation of sinful enjoyments, growth in carnal wisdom, neglect of daily mortification of such sins as men are naturally disposed unto, with a secret influence from the prevalent temptation of the days wherein we live; – which things are not now to be spoken unto.

III. But I come to that which was proposed in the third place, – namely, to show that this at present is the state of many professors of religion, that they are fallen under those spiritual decays, and do not enjoy the effects of the promises concerning flourishing and fruitfulness, which we have insisted on. To fasten a conviction on them, or some of them at least, that it is indeed so with them, is my present design; and this ought to be done with some diligence. The glory of Christ, the honour of the Gospel, and the danger of the souls of men do call for it. This is the secret root of all our evil, which will not be removed unless it be dug up. Who sees not, who complains not of the loss of, or decays in, the power of religion in the days wherein we live? But few there are who either know or apply themselves, or direct others, unto the proper remedy of this evil. Besides, it is almost as difficult to convince men of their spiritual decays as it is to recover them from them; but without this, healing is impossible. If men know not their sickness, they will not seek for a cure. Some, when they see their sickness and their wound, will apply themselves unto wrong, useless remedies, like them in the prophet Hosea, 5: 13. None will make use of any cure who see no disease at all. Wherefore, to fasten a conviction hereof on the minds of some, we may make use of the ensuing inquiries and observations.

1. Have you, in the way of your profession, had any experience of these spiritual decays? I doubt not but that there are some who have been preserved green and flourishing from their first conversion unto God, who never fell under the power of sloth, neglect, or temptation, at least not for any remarkable season; but they are but few. It was not so with scarce any of those believers under the Old Testament whose lives and walkings are recorded for our instruction; and they must be such as lived in an exact and diligent course of mortification. And some there are who have obtained relief and deliverance from under their decays, – whose backsliding have been

healed, and their diseases cured. So it was with David, as he divinely expresses it, Ps. 103: 1,3-5, “*Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who forgives all thine iniquities; who health all thy diseases: who redeems thy life from destruction; who crowns thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies: who satisfies thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle ’s.*” So does he celebrate his deliverance from that state whereof he complains, Ps. 38, – which we mentioned before. And there is no grace or mercy that does more affect the hearts of believers, that gives them a greater transport of joy and thankfulness, than this of deliverance from backsliding. It is a bringing of the soul out of prison, which enlarges it unto praise, Ps. 142: 7. Of this sort I doubt not but that there are many; for God has given great warnings of the danger of a spiritually-decaying state; and he has made great promises of recovery from it; and multitudes in the church are daily exercised herein.

But I speak in general unto all. Have you any experience of such spiritual decays, either in the frame of your spirits or in the manner of your walking before God; or, at least, that you are prone unto them, if not mightily preserved by the power of grace in your own utmost diligence? If you have not so, then I fear it is from one of these two causes: -

a) That, indeed, you have never had any flourishing spiritual state in your souls. He that has been always weak and sickly does not know what it is to want a state of health and strength, because he never had any experience of it; much less does he that is dead know what it is to want life. But he that from an exquisite temper of health falls into languishing disorder, knows distinctly both how it was and how it is with him. And the frame of the minds of many professors of religion, with the manner of their walking, is such, as that, if they are not sensible of spiritual decays, it is evident that they never had any good spiritual health; and it is to no purpose to treat with such persons about a recovery.

There are, amongst those who make an outward profession of true religion, many that live in all sorts of sins. If you should deal with them about backsliding, decays, and a recovery, you will seem unto them as Lot did to his sons-in-law, when he told them of the destruction of Sodom, – as one that mocked, or made sport with them,

Gen. 19: 14; or you will be mocked by them for your concern. They have been always such as they are; it was never otherwise with them; and it is a ridiculous thing to speak to them of a recovery. We must be able in this case to say to men, *“Remember whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works,”* Rev. 2: 5. They must have had an experience of a better state, or they will not endeavour a recovery from that wherein they are. Such, therefore, as see neither evil nor danger in their present condition, but suppose all is well enough with them, because it is as good as ever it was, will not easily be brought under this conviction; but they have that which is of no less importance for them to inquire into, – namely, whether they have had any thing of the truth of grace or no. Or, –

b) If you have not this experience, it is to be feared that you are asleep in security, – which is hardly distinguishable from death in sin. The church of Laodicea was sensibly decayed, and gone off from its primitive faith and obedience; yet she was so secure, in her condition, knew so little of it, that she judged herself, on the contrary, to be in a thriving, flourishing state. She thought herself increased in all church riches and goods, – that is, gifts and grace, – while *“she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,”* Rev. 3: 17; in such a state as wherein it is questionable whether she had any thing of the life and power of grace to be found in her or not. And so is it with many churches at this day, especially that which boasts itself to be without error or blame. And it is strange that a church should suppose that it flourishes in grace and gifts, when it has nothing but a noise of words in their stead.

So God testified concerning Ephraim, that *“grey hairs were sprinkled on him, yet he knew it not,”* Hos. 7: 9. He was in a declining, dying condition, but did not understand it. Hence it is added, *“They do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this,”* verse 10. If men will not learn and own their spiritual decays, there is no hope of prevailing with them to return unto the Lord. *“The whole have no need of a physician, but the sick;”* Christ *“came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* Such persons are under the power of a stupid security, from whence it will be very hard to rouse them up. Hence it is that we have so little success for the most part in calling persons to look after a revival and recovery of their decays; they acknowledge no such thing in

themselves, – such calls may belong unto others; yea, if any word seem to come near them unto their uneasiness, they are apt to think it was spoken out of spite and ill-will towards them: they approve themselves in their present condition. Hence is the complaint of Christ in the ministry of the Word, *“I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof,”* Prov. 1: 24, 25. Hence, let this truth be pressed a thousand times, it is not one of a thousand who will think himself so concerned as to apply himself unto a relief. A spirit of slumber seems to be poured on many.

2. To improve this conviction, I would ask of some, whether they have been able to maintain spiritual peace and joy in their souls. I take it for granted that ordinarily they are inseparable adjuncts of the life of faith, in an humble, fruitful walk before God. The Scripture testifies that they are so; and no experience lies against it in ordinary cases. And I suppose that those unto whom I speak do in some measure know what they are, and do not delude themselves with fancies and imaginations: they have substance in them, however derided by some, and to some unknown. Have this peace and joy been maintained and borne away in your minds? Have they under all trials and surprises been quickly composed by them? or are you not rather on all occasions uneasy and perplexed? This is certain, that a decaying spiritual state and solid spiritual peace are inconsistent; and if ever you had such peace, you may by the loss of it know into what state you are come.

3. Not to inquire farther into things internal and hidden, wherein men may justify themselves if they please, there are too many open, visible evidences of these decays among professors of religion; they have not kept them from the eyes of the church, nor yet from the world. Do not pride, selfishness, worldliness, levity of attire, and vanity of life, with corrupt, unsavoury communication, abound among many? The world was never in a worse posture for conformity than it is at this day, wherein all flesh has corrupted its way; and yet, as to things of outward appearance, how little distinction is left between it and those who would be esteemed more strict professors of religion! Was this the way and manner of the saints of old, – of those that went before us in the same profession? Was it so with ourselves in the time of our first espousals, when we went after God in the

wilderness, in a land that was not sown? as Jer. 2: 2. Some understand what I say: if we have not, some of us, had better days, we never had good days in our lives; if we have had them, why do we not stir up ourselves to look after a recovery?

4. May not God say of many of us what he said of his people of old, “Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel?” Isa. 43: 22. Have we not been weary of God, until we have abundant cause to be weary of ourselves? The most, I presume, will be ready, with them in Malachi, to say, “How or wherein have we been weary of God?” Do we not abide, yea, abound, in the duties of his service? What can be more required of us? Wherein are we to blame? This were something indeed, but that it is often so, that men are weary of God when they even weary God with their duties and services, Isa. 1: 13, 14. God says in his Word, he is weary: they say in their hearts, they are weary, Mal. 1: 13. But I answer, -

a) Many cannot with any modesty make use of this pretence. Their sloth, indifference, and negligence in the observance of the duties of divine worship, both in private and public, is notorious. In particular, is not the duty of family prayer neglected by many, at least as to its constancy and fervency? And although it be grounded in the light of nature, confirmed by the general rules of the Scripture, requisite unto the dedication of a family unto God, strengthened by the constant example of all the saints of old, and necessary in the experience of all that walk with God; yet do not many begin to seek out pleas and arguing to justify their omission hereof? Are not all things filled with the fruits of the negligence of such professors in the instruction of their children and servants? And has not God given severe rebukes unto many of us, in their fearful miscarriages? And as unto the public worship of God, I wish that sloth and indifference did not appear upon too many, under various pretences. But, -

b) This is not that which I do intend. Men may be weary of God, while they abide in the observance of a multitude of outward duties.

[i.] They may be so, with respect unto that spirituality and intention of mind unto the exercise of all grace, which are required unto such duties. These are the life, the soul, the animating principle of them, without which their outward performance is but a dead carcass. Men may *draw nigh to God with their lips, when their hearts are far from him*. This is that which becomes God in his worship, and

is useful to our own souls; for “*God is a Spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth;*” which he is not, but in the exercise of the graces of his Spirit in the worshipers; “*for bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things,*” 1 Tim. 4: 8.

To keep up the mind unto this frame, to stir up all grace unto a constant vigorous exercise in all holy duties, is a matter whereunto great spiritual diligence and watchfulness is required. *Watch unto prayer.* A thousand pretences rise against it; all the arts of sloth, formality, weariness of the flesh, and the business of life, do contend to frustrate the design of it. And the suitableness of resting in the work done, unto the principles of a natural conscience, gives efficacy to them all: and when men come to satisfy themselves herein, it may be it were better that for a time such duties were wholly omitted; for in that case conscience itself will urgently call on men, not hardened in sin, to a consideration of their condition: wherefore much spiritual labour and diligence is required in this matter. The outward performance of religious duties, be they never so many, or however strictly enjoined, as the daily and nightly canonical hours amongst the Popish dévots, is an easy task, – much inferior unto the constant labour which some men use in their trades and callings. And in them, in the performance of them, either public or in their families, men may be weary of God: and according as they are remiss in the constant keeping up of spirituality, and the exercise of grace in sacred duties, so is the degree of their weariness. And there is almost nothing whereby men may take a safer measure of their decays or growth, than by the usual frame of their minds in these duties. If they do constantly in them stir up themselves to take hold of God, Isa. 64: 7, it is an evidence of a good temper of spiritual health in the soul. But this will not be done without the utmost watchfulness and care against impressions from the flesh and other temptations. But sloth and formality herein is a sign of a thriftless state in the inner man: and all inventions of such formality are counterproductive unto the interest of grace.

[ii.] So is it with them also, who, attending unto the outward duties of religion, do yet indulge themselves in any known sin; for there is nothing of God in those duties which tend not unto the mortification of all sin: and men may keep up a form of godliness, to

countenance themselves in the neglect of its power. And in particular, where any known sin is indulged unto, where the mortification of it is not duly endeavoured, where our religious duties are not used, applied, and directed unto that end, there is a weariness of whatever is of God in them; nor has the soul any real intercourse or communion with God by them.

5. *If we should make a particular inquiry into the state of our souls with respect unto those graces which are most useful, and tend most to the glory of God,* it is to be feared that the decays of many would be made very evident; such are zeal, humility, contriteness of heart, spiritual-mindedness, vigour of soul, and delight in the ways of God, love, charity, self-denial, and the like. Are we fat and flourishing in these things, even in old age? Are they in us, and do they abound? as the apostle speaks, 2 Pet. 1: 8. Do we bring forth the fruit of them, so as to show the faithfulness of God in his supply of grace? I shall not make a particular inquiry into them, but only give two general rules, whereby we may try ourselves with respect unto them all.

a) The loss of a spiritual appetite unto the food of our souls is an evidence of a decay in all these graces. Spiritual appetite consists in earnest desires, and a savoury relish; so it is described by the apostle, 1 Pet. 2: 2, 3, “*As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*” There is required unto this spiritual appetite an earnest desire of the Word, grounded on an experience of the grace of God in it, unto this end, that we may grow and thrive spiritually thereby. And this appetite will give us as just a measure of the state of grace in us as a natural appetite unto wholesome food, with due digestion thereon, does give of a good state of health in the body.

This, therefore, we are to inquire into. Does it abide in us as formerly? We hear the Word preached as much as ever; but do we do it with the same desire and spiritual relish as before? Some hear to satisfy their convictions, some to please their fancies, and some to judge of the persons by whom it is dispensed. It is but in few that the necessary preparation for the due receiving of it is found.

When men grow in age, they lose much of their natural appetite unto food. They must eat still for the maintenance of life; but they do it not with that desire after it, and that gust in it, as in the days of youth and

health. Hence they are apt to think that the meat which they had formerly was more savoury than what is now provided for them; though what they now enjoy is much to be preferred before what they then had. The change is in themselves. So we may find not a few professors, who are ready to think and say that the preaching which they had in former days, and the religious exercises which they were engaged in, were far to be preferred above what they now enjoy. But the change is in themselves; they have lost their spiritual appetite, or their hunger and thirst after the food of their souls.

“The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet,” Prov. 27: 7. Men being grown full of themselves, and of a good conceit of their own abilities, have lost their spiritual appetite unto the Word of God; and this makes the Word lose its power and efficacy towards them. That Word, which the Psalmist says is *“sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb,”* Ps. 19: 10, has little or no taste or relish in it unto them. If they were hungry, they would find a sweetness in the bitterest of its reproofs, beyond what they can now find in the sweetest of its promises. They come to hear the Word with sick desires, and low expectations, as if they were invited to eat after a feast, being self-full before. But this loss of a spiritual appetite is an evidence of the decay of all other graces whatever.

b) A neglect of making religion our principal business, is another evidence of the decay of all sorts of grace in us. For where grace is in its proper exercise, it will subordinate all things unto religion, and the ends of it, as David twenty times declares in the 119th Psalm. All things, all occasions of life, shall be postponed thereunto. The love and valuation of it will bear sway in our minds, our thoughts, and affections; and the practice of it shall give rule unto all other concernments. But is it so with many amongst us. It is well if religion be one thing, – it is far enough from being the one thing; every other thing is preferred before it, and it can hardly crowd in to possess any place in their minds. To see men continually plodding in the affairs of the world, regulating all their actions by their concernment in them, diverting only at some seasons, as it were out of their way, unto duties of religion, – it is vain to say that they make religion their business. But there is scarce a more certain evidence of a frame of mind spiritually decaying in all sorts of graces, if ever any of them

were in it in sincerity and power, than this one, that men do not make religion their chiefest business. And a little self-examination will help men to judge what it is that they make so to be.

(3.) Lastly, I might also instance the uselessness of men in their profession; in want of love unto all saints, barrenness in good works, unreadiness and unwillingness to comply, in any extraordinary manner, with the calls of God unto repentance and reformation; in love of the world and pride of life, with passions suited unto such principles, predominant in them: for they are all undeniable evidences, that those with whom they are found had never any true grace at all, or that they are fallen under woeful decays. But what has been spoken may be sufficient unto our present purpose.

This is the third thing that was proposed, – namely, an endeavour to leave convictions on the minds of some concerning their spiritual decays, and the necessity of seeking after a revival by the means that shall be insisted on. And I intend it principally for those of us who, under a long profession, are now come unto age, and shall not have much time for duty continued to us. And the truth is, I meet with none who are Christians of any considerable experience, and are spiritually-minded, but they are sensible of the danger of such decays in this hour of temptation, and how difficult it is, in the use of all means, to keep up a vigorous, active frame of mind, in faith, love, holiness, and fruitfulness. And for those who are not concerned herein, I confess I know not what to make of them, or their religion.

IV. I proceed unto that which was proposed in the fourth or last place, – namely, the way and means whereby believers may be delivered from these decays, and come to thrive and flourish in the inward principle and outward fruits of spiritual life; which will bring us back unto consideration of that truth which we may seem to have diverted from. And to this end, the things ensuing are proposed unto consideration: -

1. The state of spiritual decays is recoverable. No man that is fallen under it has any reason to say, There is no hope, provided he take the right way for his recovery. If every step that is lost in the way to heaven should be irrecoverable, woe would be unto us; – we should all assuredly perish. If there were no reparation of our breaches, no healing of our decays, no salvation but for them who are always progressive in grace; if God should mark all that is done

amiss, as the Psalmist speaks, “*O Lord, who should stand?*” nay, if we had not recoveries every day, we should go off with a perpetual backsliding. But then, as was said, it is required that the right means of it be used, and not that which is destructive of what is designed; whereof I shall give an example. When trees grow old, or are decaying, it is useful to dig about them, and manure them; which may cause them to flourish again, and abound in fruit. But instead hereof, if you remove them out of their soil, to plant them in another, which may promise much advantage, they will assuredly wither and die. So it is with professors, and has been with many. Finding themselves under manifold decays, and little or nothing of the life and power of religion left in them, they have grown weary of their station and have changed their soil, or turning from one way in religion unto another, as some have turned Papists, some Quakers, and the like, apprehending that fault to be in the religion which they professed, which was indeed only in themselves. You cannot give an instance of any one who did not visibly wither and die therein; but, had they used the proper means for their healing and recovery, they might have lived and brought forth fruit.

2. *A strict attendance unto the severities of mortification, with all the duties that lead thereunto, is required unto this end; so also is the utmost diligence in all duties of obedience.* These things naturally offer themselves as the first relief in this case, and they ought not to be omitted. But if I should insist upon them, they would branch themselves into such a multitude of particular directions, as it is inconsistent with my design here to handle. Besides, the way which I intend to propose is of another nature, though consistent with all the duties included in this proposal; yea, such as without which not one of them can be performed in a due manner. Wherefore, as unto these things, I shall only assert their necessity, with a double limitation.

a) That no duties of mortification be prescribed unto this end, as a means of recovery from spiritual decays, but what for matter and manner are of divine institution and command. All others are laid under a severe interdict, under what pretence soever they may be used. “*Who hath required these things at your hands?*” Want hereof is that whereby a pretended design to advance religion in the Papacy has ruined it. They have, under the name and pretence of the means of mortification, or the duties of it, invented and enjoined, like the

Pharisees, a number of works, ways, duties, so called, which God never appointed, nor approved, nor will accept; nor shall they ever do good unto the souls of men. Such are their confessions, disciplines, pilgrimages, fastings, abstinence, framed prayers, to be repeated in stated canonical hours, in such a length and number. In the bodily labour of these things they exercise themselves to no spiritual advantage.

But it is natural to all men to divert to such reliefs in this case. Those who are thoroughly convinced of spiritual decays, are therewithal pressed with a sense of the guilt of sin; for it is sin which has brought them into that condition. Hereon, in the first place, they set their contrivance at work, how they may atone divine displeasure and obtain acceptance with God; and if they are not under the actual conduct of evangelical light, two things immediately offer themselves unto them. *First*, Some extraordinary course in duties, which God has not commanded. This is the way which they retake themselves unto in the Papacy, and which guilt, in the darkness of corrupted nature, vehemently calls for. *Secondly*, An extraordinary multiplication of such duties as, for the substance of them, are required of us. An instance in both kinds we have, Micah 6: 6, 7, “*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*” And by this means they hope for a restitution into their former condition. And whereas spiritual decays are of two sorts; *first*, from the power and effect of convictions only, which are multiplied among temporary believers; and, *secondly*, from degrees in the power and effects of saving grace; – those whose decays are of the first sort are never to be diverted from attempting their relief by such means; and when they find them fail, for the most part they cease contending, and abandon themselves to the power of their lusts; for they have no evangelical light to guide them in another course.

Unto them who are of the second sort is this direction given, in an endeavour for a recovery from backsliding, and thriving in grace, by a redoubled attendance unto the duties of mortification and new obedience: Let care be taken that, as unto the matter of them, they be

of divine appointment; and as to the manner of their performance, that it be regulated by the rules of the Scripture. Such are constant reading and hearing of the Word, prayer with fervency therein, a diligent watch against all temptations and occasions of sin; especially an endeavour, by a holy earnestness, and vehement rebukes of the entrance of any other frame, to keep the mind spiritual and heavenly in its thoughts and affections.

c) Let them take heed that they attempt not these things in their own strength. When men have strong convictions that such and such things are their own duty, they are apt to act as if they were to be done in their own strength. They must do them, they will do them, – that is, as unto the outward work, – and, therefore, they think they can do them; that is, in a due manner. The Holy Ghost has for ever rejected this confidence, – none shall prosper in it, 2 Cor. 3: 5; 9: 8. But hereby many deceive themselves, labouring in the fire, while all they do does immediately perish; they have been negligent and careless, whereby things are come to an ill posture with them, and that peace which they had is impaired; but now they will pray, and read, and fast, and be liberal to the poor, and now strive after an abstinence from sin. All these things they suppose they can do of themselves, because they can and ought to perform the outward works, wherein the duties intended do consist. Hereby Christ is left out of the whole design, who, when all is done, is the Lord that heals us? Exod. 15: 26. And there is another evil herein; for whatever men do in their own natural abilities, there is a secret reserve of some kind of merit in it. Those who plead for these things, do aver there can be no merit in any thing but what proceeds from our own free-will; and what is so done has some kind of merit inseparably accompanying of it; and this is enough to render all endeavours of this kind not only useless and fruitless, but utterly rejected. Faith must engage the assistance of Christ and his grace in and unto these duties; or, however they may be multiplied, they will not be effectual unto our healing and recovery. These things are to be used, according as we receive supplies of grace from above, in subordination unto that work of faith that shall be declared. Wherefore, -

3. The work of recovering backsliders or believers from under their spiritual decays is an act of sovereign grace, wrought in us by virtue of divine promises. Out of this eater comes meat. Because

believers are liable to such declensions, backsliding, and decays, God has provided and given unto us great and precious promises of a recovery, if we duly apply ourselves unto the means of it. One of the places only wherein they are recorded I shall here call over and explain, Hos. 14: 1-8, "*O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn unto the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips,*" &c. "*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him. I am like a green fir-tree: from me is thy fruit found.*"

The whole matter treated of in general, both as unto the disease and remedy, is fully stated in this passage of Scripture; and that in the experience of the church, and God 's dealing with them; we may therefore receive many plain directions from it, and a safe guidance in our progress; which we shall endeavour to take in the ensuing observations: -

a) This application of God unto Israel, "*O Israel, return,*" was made when the generality of the people were wicked, and devoted unto utter destruction. So it is declared in the last words of the foregoing chapter; and their desolation fell out not long after accordingly. Wherefore no season nor circumstances of things shall obstruct sovereign grace when God will exercise it towards his church: it shall work in the midst of desolating judgements.

b) In such a time the true Israel of God, the elect themselves, are apt to be overtaken with the sins of the whole, and so to backslide from God, and so to fall into spiritual decays. So Israel had now done, though she had not absolutely broken covenant with God. He was yet unto her "*The LORD thy God;*" yet she had fallen by her iniquity. Times of public apostasy are often accompanied with partial defects in the best: "*Because iniquity aboundeth, the love of many shall wax cold,*" Matt. 24: 12.

c) When God designs to heal the backsliding of his people by sovereign grace, he gives them effectual calls unto repentance, and the use of means for their healing: so he does here by his prophet, “*O Israel, return; take with you words.*” And if I could see that God did stir up his faithful ministers to apply themselves in a peculiar manner unto this work of pressing vehemently all their congregations with their duty herein, and let them know that there is no other way to prevent their ruin but by returning unto the Lord, according to the ways of it here prescribed, I should not doubt but that the time of healing were at hand.

4. The means prescribed unto this end, that our backsliding may be healed in a way suited unto the glory of God, is renewed repentance: and this acts itself, -

a) In fervent prayer. *Take with you words, and say.*” Consider the greatness and importance of the work before you, and weigh well what you do in your dealing with God. The matter of this prayer is twofold.

[i.] The pardon of all iniquity; that is, the taking of it away; and no sin is omitted, all being now become equally burdensome: “*Take away all iniquity.*” When the souls of sinners are in good earnest in their return unto God, they will leave out the consideration of no one sin whatever. Nor are we meet for healing, nor shall we apply ourselves unto it in a due manner, without some previous sense of the love of God in the pardon of our sin.

[ii.] Gracious acceptation: “*Receive us graciously.*” The words in the original are only “wekach tov” ■■■■■■■■■■. “And receive good;” but both the words being used variously, the sense eminently included in them is well expressed by – “*Receive us graciously.*” After we have cast ourselves under tokens of thy displeasure, now let us know that we are freely accepted with thee. And this also lies in the desires of them who design to obtain a healing of their backsliding; for under them they are sensible that they are obnoxious unto God’s displeasure.

b) Affectionate confessions of the sin wherein their backsliding did consist, or which were the occasions of them. “*Asshur shall not save us;*” – “*We will say no more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.*” Fleshly confidence and false worship were the two great sins that had now ruined the body of the people. These believers

themselves had an accession unto them more or less, as now they have unto the prevailing sins of the days wherein we live, by conformity unto the world. Of these sins God expects a full and free confession, in order unto our healing.

c) A renewed covenant engagement to renounce all other hopes and expectation, and to retake themselves with their whole trust and confidence unto him; whereof they express, first, the cause, which was his mere grace and mercy, "*For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy;*" and, secondly, the effect of it, which is praise and thanksgiving, "*So will we render the calves of our lips.*" And some things we may hence farther observe as unto the case under consideration. As, -

[i.] Although God will repair our spiritual decays and heal our backsliding freely, yet he will do it so, or in such a way, as wherein he may communicate grace unto us, to the praise of his own glory. Therefore are these duties prescribed unto us in order thereunto; for although they are not the procuring cause of the love and grace from whence alone we are healed, yet they are required, in the method of the dispensation of grace, to precede the effect of them. Nor have we anywhere a more illustrious instance and testimony of the consistency and harmony which is between sovereign grace and the diligent discharge of our duty than we have in this place; for as God promised that he would heal their backsliding out of his free love, verse 4, and would do it by the communication of effectual grace, verse 5, so he enjoins them all these duties in order thereunto.

[ii.] That unless we find these things wrought in us in a way of preparation for the receiving of the mercy desired, we have no firm ground of expectation that we shall be made partakers of it; for this is the method of God's dealing with the church. Then, and then only, we may expect a gracious reviving from all our decays, when serious repentance, working in the ways declared, is found in us. This grace will not surprise us in our sloth, negligence, and security, but will make way for itself by stirring us up unto sincere endeavours after it in the perseverance of these duties. And until we see better evidences of this repentance among us than as yet appears, we can have but small hopes of a general recovery from our present decays.

5. The work itself is declared, – (1.) By its nature; (2.) In its causes; (3.) From its effects.

a) In the nature of it, it is the healing of backsliding: “I will heal their backsliding,” the sin whereby they are fallen off from God, unto whom they are now exhorted to return. These bring the souls of men into a diseased state and danger of death: the cure hereof is the work of God alone. Hence he gives himself that title, “*I am the LORD that health thee,*” Exod. 15: 26. And because of the poisonous nature of sin, and the danger it brings of eternal death unto the souls of men, the removal of it, or a recovery from it, is often called by the name of healing, Ps 6: 2; Isa. 57: 18, 19; Hos. 6: 1. Here it includes two things: first, the pardon of sin past; and then, a supply of grace to make us fruitful in obedience: “*I will be as the dew to Israel;*” as we shall see. This is God’s healing of backslidings.

b) In the causes of it, which are, – 1. The principal moving cause; and that is, free, undeserved love: “*I will love them freely.*” From hence alone is our recovery to be expected. 2. The efficient cause; which, as unto sins past, is pardoning mercy: “*Mine anger is turned away from him;*” – and as unto renewed obedience, in which too our recovery consists, it is in a plentiful supply of effectual grace: “*I will be as the dew unto Israel.*” Fresh supplies of the Spirit of grace from above are so expressed; this is necessary unto our healing and recovery.

c) It is described by its effect, which is a much more abundant fruitfulness in holiness and obedience, in peace and love, than ever they had before attained. This the prophet sets out in multiplied similitudes and metaphors, to denote the greatness and efficacy of grace so communicated.

I have a little insisted on the opening of the context, for sundry reasons.

1. The case which I would consider is in all the parts of it stated distinctly, and represented clearly unto us. There is nothing remains, but only the special way whereby, in the exercise of faith, this grace may be obtained; which is that which I shall speak unto in the last place, as that which is principally intended in this Discourse.

2. That I might show how great a thing it is to have our spiritual decays made up, our backsliding healed, and so to attain the

vigorous acting of grace and spiritual life, with a flourishing profession and fruitful obedience, in old age. It is so set forth here by the Holy Ghost, as that every one must needs have a sense of the beauty and glory of the work: it is that which divine love, mercy, and grace, are eminently effectual in unto the glory of God, – that which so many duties are required to prepare us for. Let no man think that it is a light or common work; every thing in it is special: it is, unto them who are made partakers of it, a life from the dead.

3. *That none may utterly despond under their decays.* When persons are awakened by new convictions, and begin to feel the weight of them, and how implicitly they are entangled with them, they are ready to faint, and even to despair of deliverance. But we see that here is a promise of deliverance from them by pardoning mercy, and also of such fresh springs of grace as shall cause us to abound in holiness and fruitfulness. Who is it that is entangled with corruptions and temptations, that groans under a sense of a cold, lifeless, barren frame of heart? He may take in spiritual refreshment, if by faith he can make application of this promise unto himself.

4. *That which remains, is to declare the particular way whereby, in the exercise of faith, we may obtain the fruit of this and all other promises of the like nature, unto the end so often proposed,* – namely, of being flourishing and fruitful even in old age. Now, supposing a due attendance unto the duties mentioned, I shall give some directions with respect unto that which gives life, power, and efficacy unto them all, and which will infallibly bring us unto the full enjoyment of this signal mercy; and they are these that follow: -

a) All our supplies of grace are from Jesus Christ. Grace is declared in the promises of the Old Testament; but the way of its communication, and our receiving of it, is revealed unto us in the New. This belongs to the mystery of it, that all grace is from Christ, and shall be in vain expected any other way. He has assured us, that “*without him we can do nothing;*” we can no more bring forth fruit, than a branch can that is separated from the vine, John 15: 3-5. He is our head, and all our spiritual influences – that is, divine communication of grace – are from him alone. He is our life efficiently, and liveth in us effectively, so as that our ability for vital acts is from him, Gal 2: 20; Col. 3: 1-4. Are we, then, any of us under convictions of spiritual decays? or do we long for such renovations of

spiritual strength as may make us flourish in faith, love, and holiness? We must know assuredly, that nothing of all this can be attained, but it must come from Jesus Christ alone. We see what promises are made, what duties are prescribed unto us; but however we should endeavour to apply ourselves unto the one or the other, they would yield us no relief, unless we know how to receive it from Christ himself.

b) The only way of receiving supplies of spiritual strength and grace from Jesus Christ, on our part, is by faith. Hereby we come unto him, are implanted in him, abide with him, so as to bring forth fruit. He dwells in our hearts by faith, and he acts in us by faith, and we live by faith in or on the Son of God. This, I suppose, will be granted, that if we receive any thing from Christ, it must be by faith, it must be in the exercise of it, or in a way of believing; nor is there any one word in the Scripture that gives the least encouragement to expect either grace or mercy from him in any other way, or by any other means.

c) This faith respects the person of Christ, his grace, his whole mediation, with all the effects of it, and his glory in them all. This is that which has been so much insisted on in the foregoing Discourses as that it ought not to be again insisted upon. This, therefore, is the issue of the whole: – a steady view of the glory of Christ, in his person, grace, and office, through faith, – or a constant, lively exercise of faith on him, according as he is revealed unto us in the Scripture, – is the only effectual way to obtain a revival from under our spiritual decays, and such supplies of grace as shall make us flourishing and fruitful even in old age. He that thus lives by faith in him shall, by his spiritual thriving and growth, *“show that the Lord is upright, that he is our rock, and that there is no unrighteousness in him.”*

We may consider briefly, – first, how this is testified unto in the Scripture; and then, what are the ways whereby this grace or duty will produce this effect; and so put a close unto this part of the application of the sacred truth before declared.

1. This direction is given us, Ps. 34: 5, “They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.” That it is Christ, or the glory of God in him, that is thus looked unto, I need not prove, – it will not be denied. And it is their faith which is expressed

by their looking unto him; which is nothing but that beholding of his glory which we have described: for it is an act of trust arising from an apprehension of who and what he is. The issue or effect hereof is, that they were lightened; that is, received fresh communication of spiritual, saving, refreshing light from him, and, consequently, of all other graces, whence their faces were not ashamed: nor shall we fail in our expectation of new spiritual communication in the exercise of the same faith.

This is that which we are called unto, Is 45: 22, *“Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.”* On this look to Christ, on this view of his glory, depends our whole salvation; and therefore all things that are needful thereunto do so also: this is the way whereby we receive grace and glory. This is the direction given us by the Holy Ghost for the attaining of them.

So is the same duty described, Micah 7: 7, *“Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.”* The church knew not any other way of relief, whatever her distresses were.

A look unto Christ as crucified (and how glorious he was therein, has been declared) is made the cause and fountain of that godly sorrow which is a spring unto all other graces, especially in those who have fallen under decay, Zech. 12: 10; and it is so also of desiring strength from him, to enable us to endure all our trials, troubles, and afflictions, with patience unto the end, Heb. 12: 2.

2. *The only inquiry remaining, is, how a constant view of the glory of Christ will produce this blessed effect in us: and it will do so several ways.*

a) It will be effected by that transforming power and efficacy which this exercise of faith is always accompanied with. This is that which changes us every day more and more into the likeness of Christ, as has been at large before declared. Herein all revivals and all flourishing are contained. To have a good measure of conformity unto Christ is all whereof in this life we are capable: the perfection of it is eternal blessedness. According as are our attainments therein, so is the thriving and flourishing of the life of grace in us; which is that which is aimed at. Other ways and means, it may be, have failed us, let us put this to the trial. Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, and virtue will proceed from him to repair all our

decays, to renew a right spirit within us, and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience. This way of producing these effects flesh and blood will not reveal, – it looks like washing in Jordan to cure a leprosy; but the life of faith is a mystery known only unto them in whom it is.

b) It will fix the soul unto that object which is suited to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction. This in perfection is blessedness, for it is caused by the eternal vision of the glory of God in Christ; and the nearer approaches we make unto this state, the better, the more spiritual, the more heavenly, is the state of our souls. And this is to be obtained only by a constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, as has been declared.

And it is several ways effectual unto the end now proposed. For, -

1. The most of our spiritual decays and barrenness arise from an inordinate admission of other things into our minds; for these are they that weaken grace in all its operations. But when the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ and his glory, when the soul thereon cleaves unto him with intense affections, they will cast out, or not give admittance unto, those causes of spiritual weakness and indisposition. See Col. 3: 1-5; Eph. 5: 8.

2. Where we are engaged in this duty, it will stir up every grace unto its due exercise; which is that wherein the spiritual revival inquired after does consist. This is all we desire, all we long for, this will make us fat and flourishing, – namely, that every grace of the Spirit have its due exercise in us. See Rom. 5: 3-5; 2 Pet. 1: 5-8. Whereas, therefore, Christ himself is the first proper, adequate object of all grace, and all its exercise (for it first respects him, and then other things for him), when the mind is fixed on him and his glory, every grace will be in a readiness for its due exercise. And without this we shall never attain it by any resolutions or endeavours of our own, let us make the trial when we please.

3. This will assuredly put us on a vigilant watch and constant conflict against all the deceitful workings of sin, against all the entrances of temptation, against all the ways and means of surprises into foolish frames, by vain imaginations which are the causes of our decays. Our recovery or revival will not be effected, nor a fresh spring of grace be obtained, in a careless, slothful course of profession. Constant watching, fighting, contending against sin, with

our utmost endeavour for an absolute conquest over it, are required hereunto. And nothing will so much excite and encourage our souls hereunto as a constant view of Christ and his glory; every thing in him has a constraining power hereunto, as is known to all who have any acquaintance with these things.

End.