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more work

T. H. E.

Best Match;

O R,

The Soul's Espousal

T O

C H R I S T

Opened and Improved,

BY EDWARD PEARSE,

JOHN iii. 29, 30. *He that bath the Bride, is the
Bridegroom, &c.*

A NEW EDITION.

James D. ...
EDINBURGH.

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T H E

A U T H O R t o t h e R E A D E R.

R E A D E R,

NEXT to the full and immediate vision and fruition of the God of glory above; the greatest happiness of souls lies in union and communion with Christ here: Nor indeed can we ever attain unto the one, without an acquaintance with the other. Now, to bring thee into and build thee up in this union and communion with Christ, and thereby to fit and dispose thee, for that glorious vision and fruition above, is the principal design of the ensuing discourse. If thou requirest a reason of the publication hereof, I desire thee to satisfy thyself with this; God in his all-wise and holy providence, hath seen good now for several months to call the unworthy author out of his vineyard; and lodge him in a sick chamber; and he also seems to be speedily calling him out of this world, and to bring that night upon him, wherein no man can work; wherein nothing is to be done, either for God or man's soul, *John ix. 4.* And being never like to do more for Christ on earth; he was willing in hopes of advancing his dear Lord's kingdom, in the drawing of sinners to him, and building up of saints in him, and communion with him, to make these poor, contemplations public. God was pleased some few years since, to make a more than ordinary use of the preachings of them, many souls being through his grace espoused to Christ, and more brought nearer to him thereby; and had I not some hopes that he would also, through that same grace of his, make some use of the reading of them for thy

good, and the good of others, I think they had never seen the light. Thy good then, and Christ's glory in the enlargement of his kingdom, is the thing aimed at herein; which the good Lord by his grace accomplisheth. I am lying daily by the brink of the grave, waiting upon the will, and for the call of my Sovereign Lord; the only reason swaying with me to desire life, next to the more thorough-working out my own salvation, is to reveal, and make known Christ to souls, and to publish the glad tidings of peace and salvation to a lost and sinful world: But if God will make no further use of me that way, his will be done. I comfort myself with what an holy man speaks, "Sinless glorifying of God, (saith he) is better than sinful glorifying of God." His meaning I suppose is, that it is better to glorify God in a sinless, than a sinful state: Truly here we sin in our best actions; and if we bring a little glory to God, yet wo and alas! how much dishonour do we also bring him! And what Iniquities do there cleave to our most holy things! But above, we shall glorify him without sinning; we shall love him, praise him, admire him, adore him, delight in him, and ascribe glory to him, without the least taint or tincture of sin cleaving thereunto; having not only all tears wiped off our eyes, but which is infinitely, infinitely, infinitely better, all sin purged from our hearts and actions. Farewel. I leave thee, and this poor treatise, to the blessing of heaven.

To the R E A D E R.

TH E R E are two main ends, for which the Gospel Ministry is ordained; the one is, the winning of souls and bringing them into Christ; the other is the edification and building up of such as are already brought in. It hath pleased Christ, the Head of the Church, who distributed gifts in order to the Salvation of men, unto whom and in what measure he pleaseth, to furnish the Author of this discourse with good abilities as to both these works. As to the first, the Lord hath given him a peculiar gift, to qualify him above many, to preach the gospel for the winning of souls; and the grace of God in him did inflame his heart with ardent desires, and did excite great longings in him after the conversion of souls: And he was pleased to crown his own gifts and graces in him with great success; * many a soul having been turned unto God by his labours. And it having pleased God, to cast the Author into a languishing distemper for some months, whereby he was wholly taken off from his work in preaching, so great did the desire of doing good to souls remain in him, and such were the yearnings of his bowels towards them, that being not able to speak to them any longer out of the pulpit, he could not satisfy himself, but he must needs speak to them in this small tract: wherein his great scope and principal design is, to allure and draw souls unto Christ. As to the matter of the Treatise, I need say little, it will sufficiently speak for itself; only thus much I may say, Union with Christ is the foundation of our happiness. The Apostle tells us, that Christ in us is the hope of glory: we cannot have any sure or sound title to eternal life and glory, but by union with Christ; whoever are saved, are saved by being brought under Christ, as their Head, Eph. ii. 10. That in the

* See Calamy's account of the lives and sufferings of the Nonconformists, Page 37. vol. ii.

dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ; that he might bring them under one head: So Zanchy and others interpret the Greek word there used: The Son of God incarnate, is the true Vine into which the elect are implanted. There are but two roots of mankind, the first and the second Adam; the first Adam is the root of sin and death unto all that abide in him; the second Adam is the root of righteousness and life unto all, who are implanted into him. The scope of this discourse is to persuade men not to be content to abide in the root upon which they naturally grow, *viz.* the root of the first Adam, but to seek after a new relation unto Christ the second Adam. The arguments by which the author presseth souls to come to Christ, are most patheticall and strong; and as there is a vein of heavenly affection, which runneth through the whole body of the discourse, to allure such who are yet strangers to the Lord Jesus, to fall in love with him; so there is much solid matter interwoven, whereby those who are already called, and have attained to some acquaintance with spiritual things, may receive farther advantage. It pleaseth the All-wise God to leave the Author at a great uncertainty as to life; the Lord hath kept him in the furnace long, but he hath chosen and refined him in it; and whether it be in this, or in the other world, that he shall please to bring him forth, they who have most intimate converse with him, are persuaded, he will come forth as gold. The Lord grant, That the same presence of Divine Grace, which attended those Sermons in preaching of them, may accompany them in the Publication, that many more souls may be enamour'd and drawn to the Love of that fairest of ten thousands, the Lord Jesus: that to knowing him, and adhering to him, they may be saved eternally by him, by whom all that have been, are or shall be saved, are brought to life and glory:

So prays the unworthiest of CHRIST'S SERVANTS,

JOHN KEW.

*The Song of Simeon ; or, Death made desirable,
Luke i. 27. &c.*

- 1 **L**ORD, at thy temple we appear,
As happy Simeon came,
And hope to meet our Saviour here ;
O make our joys the same !
- 2 With what divine and vast delight
The good old man was fill'd,
When fondly in his wither'd arms
He clasp'd the holy Child !
- 3 " Now I can leave this world," he cry'd,
" Behold, thy servant dies ;
" I've seen thy great salvation, Lord,
" And close my peaceful eyes.
- 4 " This is the light prepar'd to shine
" Upon the Gentile lands,
" Thine Isr'el's glory, and their hope,
" To break their slavish bands."
- [5 Jesus ! the vision of thy face
Hath overpow'ring charms !
Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms.
- 6 Then will ye hear my heart-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll !
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
And glory in my soul.]

The last Judgment, Rev. xxi. 5, 6, 7, 8.

- 1 **S**EE where the great incarnate God
Fills a majestic throne,
Whilst from the skies his awful voice
Bears the last judgment down.

- [2 "I am the first, and I the last,
 "Through endless years the same;
 "I *AM* is my memorial still,
 "And my eternal name.
- 3 "Such favours as a God can give,
 "My royal grace bestows:
 "Ye thirsty souls, come taste the streams
 "Where life and pleasure flows.]
- 4 "The saint that triumphs o'er his sins,
 "I'll own him for a son;
 "The whole creation shall reward
 "The conquest he has won.
- 5 "But bloody hands and hearts unclean,
 "And all the lying race,
 "The faithless and the scoffing crew,
 "That spurn at offer'd grace,
- 6 "They shall be taken from my sight,
 "Bound fast in iron chains,
 "And headlong plung'd into the lake
 "Where fire and darkness reigns.]"
- 7 O may I stand before the Lamb,
 When earth and seas are fled!
 And hear the Judge pronounce my name
 With blessings on my head:
- 8 May I with those for ever dwell,
 Who here were my delight,
 While sinners banish'd down to hell
 No more offend my sight.

THE BEST MATCH; OR, THE SOUL'S Espousal to CHRIST.

From 2 COR. xi. 2. *I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you a chaste Virgin unto CHRIST.*

C H A P. I.

Wherein an Introduction is made unto our intended Discourse, the Foundation thereof laid, and the Matters to be inquired into in our Procedure therein proposed.

A NEW Covenant relation to Christ, is certainly a concern of the greatest weight, and highest importance to the sons of men of any in the world; 'tis what lies at the foundation of all true happiness, both in time and eternity; without it (as a learned Divine hath well observed) we are not Christians, we are only the carcases of Christians; nor may we expect any saving advantage by any thing that Christ hath either done or suffered for poor sinners: And this relation, of so much weight and importance to us, the scripture represents under various notions and expressions to us: 'Tis represented to us, sometimes under the notion of a *king and subjects*; hence Christ is called *King of saints*: Sometimes under the notion of a *Father and his children*; hence he is called the *everlasting Father*; and they are his own words unto God the Father: *Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me.* Sometimes under the notion of *head and members*; hence Christ is said to be the *head of the body the Church*; and on the other hand, believers are said to be *the body of Christ, and members one of another.* And to mention no more, sometimes as in my text, and frequently elsewhere) 'tis repre-

sented to us under the notion of a husband and wife, bridegroom and bride, or the soul's espousal to Christ as its own and only husband: and under this notion I shall, God assisting, speak a little of it, and but a little, no more than to make way for a practical design I have in my eye, which is to woo and allure poor souls into an espousal or marriage covenant with this blessed husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That then, which is before us to be treated of, is the marriage or espousal between Christ and believers; and the better to make way hereunto, you may observe, that there is a threefold marriage, as relating to Christ and us.

1. There is the personal marriage, and that is between the Person of the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, and our nature: This *Calvin* calls, *verbum incarnatum*, the incarnate word; or, as the *Evangelist* expresses it, *the word made flesh*, John i. 14. This we generally call the hypostatical union. ●●

2. There is the mystical marriage, and that is between the person of Christ, God-man, and the person of believers, as militant here on earth; whole Christ, and the whole believer being made one; this the apostle calls, *A being joined to the Lord, and being one spirit with him*. 1 Cor. vi. 17. and this we usually call the spiritual Union.

3. There is the heavenly marriage: and that is between Christ and the Church triumphant above; which indeed is the consummation of the two former; and this I would call the glorious union, and what that is I can't tell, but do hope am going to see. — in the first of these lies the foundation of all our happiness; by the second, we are brought into an initial participation of it; by the third, we are put into the full possession and enjoyment thereof for ever. Now 'tis neither the first, nor the last, but second of these that the *Apostle* here speaks of, when he saith, *I have espoused you to one husband, even to Christ*: Which accordingly I shall make the subject of my en-

suings discourse; which, as also the sum of the apostles intendment, you may take in this short position, viz.

- “ That there is a blessed espousal, or marriage-
 “ relation between Christ and believers; or
 “ that believers are married or espoused to
 “ Christ, as their only Husband.”

I have espoused you, says the apostle, *to one husband*; not to many, but to one; and who is that? why Christ, God-man: So the next words declare, *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* The same is also held forth in other scriptures, *John iii. 29. He that hath the Bride, is the Bridegroom*, saith John Baptist concerning Christ and his Church: And again, *Rev xxi. 9. Come hither*, says the angel to John, *and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*: That is, *the church*, which is the wife and spouse of Christ; but I forbear.

What this espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers is; as also how 'tis made up and accomplished, are the principal things to be enquired into, for the clearing of what lies before us; which therefore I shall address myself unto.

C H A P. II

The Espousal or Marriage relation between Christ and believers opened; and the import thereof laid down in five things.

BUT what is this espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers? The apostle speaking of it, calls it *a great mystery*; *This* (saith he) *is a great mystery*; but I speak concerning Christ and his church, *Eph. v. 32. I speak of that spiritual marriage that is between Christ and his people*, which indeed is a great mystery, that is an hidden secret thing; a thing hid from human reason, and not to be understood but by divine revelation, and the light of the holy spirit. So far as we apprehend it, you may take this short account in general of it: 'Tis

that spiritual conjunction or relation that is between Christ and believers, between the person of Christ, and the persons of believers, arising from his inhabitation in them by his spirit, and their closing with him by faith. Much might be said for the opening of this general conclusion; but I shall wave it, and give you the true nature of the *thing* under consideration: more particularly, as carrying these five things in it, *viz.*

- I. Free and cordial donation.
- II. Near and intimate union.
- III. Sweet and lasting communion.
- IV. Strong and ardent affection.
- V. Mutual rest and complacency for ever.

I. This espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, carries in it a free and cordial donation; a giving of themselves each to other. In marriages or espousals, the Parties give themselves each to other; the husband gives himself unto the wife, and the wife by way of return, gives herself unto the husband; they consent to take each other in that relation, and accordingly to give up themselves each to other. So in this spiritual espousal, or marriage-relation between Christ and his people, there is a giving of themselves each to other; they consent to take each other, and accordingly to give up themselves each to other,——Christ, on the one hand, gives himself unto the soul; *I will be thine*, says he, *to the soul*; *thine to love thee*, *to save thee*, *to make thee happy in me*, *and with me*; *I, with all my riches and treasures*, *will be fully and for ever thine*, *I will be for thee*; that is the Language of his espoused love unto the soul, *Hos. iii. 3*. And oh, how sweet is this language! What can Christ give to poor souls like himself? In giving himself, he gives the best gift that either heaven or earth affords: In giving himself, he gives life, he gives peace, he gives grace, he gives righteousness, he gives the favour of God, he gives heaven, he gives all. O sweet gift!——On the other hand,

the soul by way of return, gives him self to Christ: I will be thine, says the soul to Christ, I will be for thee, and not for another: Hence 'tis said, *They gave themselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5.* They freely and willingly yielded up themselves to Christ, to be his, and his for ever: Sweet Jesus, such as I am, and have, I give to thee. I am a poor, a sorry gift (says the soul) infinitely unworthy of thine acceptance; my best is too bad, my all is too little for thee: but seeing 'tis thy pleasure to call for, and accept of such a gift at my hands, I do with my whole soul give up myself, my strength, my time, my talents, my all for ever to thee. And tho' the truth is, this be a sorry gift, yet you little think how pleasing, how grateful it is to Christ, and what a value he puts upon it. You have the whole of this owned and asserted by the Spouse, *Cant. ii. 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his.*

II. This espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, carries in it a near and intimate union. In marriage there is a very near union and conjunction between the parties; as they give up themselves each to other, so they become one each with other; *They are no more twain, but one flesh,* Matth. xix. 6. So in this espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, there is a very near union and conjunction between them, they two are made one; and thus the Apostle sets forth the marriage between Christ and them, *Eph. v. 31, 32. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church; that is, I speak of the marriage-relation which is between Christ and the church which consists in union: Hence also believers are said to be joined to the Lord, and to be one spirit with him, 1 Cor. vi. 17.* So that espousing to Christ, and being joined to Christ, are all one. The truth is, herein lies the very soul and substance of this spiritual marriage, viz. in a spiritual union between Christ

and the believer: Tho' Christ and the soul were two before, two that were strangers each to other, yet in this marriage or espousal they become one, and so one, as that all the world can never make them two again, never dissolve this union: *By this usual, but of all others most pleasant metaphor of a bridegroom and bride (as a learned man hath observed) is expressed and set forth the spiritual union that is between Christ and the church, Christ and every holy soul.* And this union is a full union, an union between the whole person of Christ, and the whole person of the believer; the whole person of Christ is united unto the believer, and the whole person of the believer is united unto Christ. *Neither is our soul alone (saith a learned man) joined with the soul of Christ alone; nor is our flesh alone joined with the flesh of Christ alone; but the whole person of every believer is truly joined with the whole person of Christ.*

1. On the one hand, the whole person of Christ is united to the believer; the believer's union with Christ, is neither with the divine or human nature considered apart; but it is with the whole person consisting of both natures: and indeed, else they could not be said to be united to Christ; for neither of the natures considered apart, is Christ: we cannot say, that the divine nature is Christ, or that the human nature is Christ; but Christ is both the divine and human nature, God-man, in one person. *Christ (saith a learned man) is not a name of either nature, but of the person consisting of both natures, together with his office.* Besides, were we united only to one nature, and not to the whole person of Christ, what would our union avail us? Surely it would be vain and ineffectual. Were we united to the human nature only, and not to the divine, then to be sure our union must be ineffectual; for Christ himself tells us, *That it is the spirit which quickneth, the flesh profiteth nothing,* John vi. 63. That is (as judicious interpreters expound it) the flesh, or human nature of Christ considered alone, and without the influence

of the divine, availeth nothing to souls as to their spiritual or eternal good: Nor indeed can the human nature of Christ, without the divine, give grace, or any spiritual good thing. On the other hand, were we united to the divine nature alone, and not to the human, then our union would be as ineffectual; for how full soever the divine nature is of grace and life in itself, yet nothing can thence be derived and communicated to us, but by and through the humanity. And indeed, as the humanity profiteth nothing without the divinity; so I may say, the divinity will profit us nothing without the humanity. Hence it is, that Christ so often speaks of *eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*; and withal asserts the necessity thereof in order to life and happiness by him, *John vi. 53. 54. 55.* What doth *eating his flesh and drinking his blood* signify, but an union with his humanity? And therefore in *ver. 56.* he addeth, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him*; which is an expression of union: and without this, we have, we can have no life, no grace from him. In a word, as the humanity hath nothing to give or communicate to us, no life, no grace, no spiritual blessing without the divinity; so the divinity is incommunicable to us without the humanity, and therefore were our union with the one only, without the other, it must needs be ineffectual. I will close this with the saying of an eminent divine; "Although
 " all life, all salvation floweth from the fulness of the
 " Deity that is in Christ, yet notwithstanding it is not
 " communicated to us but in the flesh, and by the
 " flesh of Christ. For the Deity is the fountain
 " whence all good things flow, life and salvation;
 " but the flesh, or humanity, is as the channel by
 " which all these good things, and all gifts and graces
 " are derived unto us; therefore unless a man apprehendeth this channel, and be united to it, he cannot possibly be made a partaker of these waters which do flow from this fountain."

2. On the other hand, the whole person of the be-

believer is united to Christ; not his soul only without his body, nor yet his body only without his soul, but his whole person consisting of both soul and body in conjunction: As Christ is the Saviour, so he is the head of the whole person of every believer, for he saves none but those whom he is head unto: And as Christ is the head of, so he must have union with the whole person of every believer; for his being an head, implies union, and that union must extend as far as his headship doth, even to the whole person: In short, the believer's soul is united to Christ; therefore saith the apostle, *1 Cor. vi. 17. He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit*; and the believer's body is united to Christ, and therefore the bodies of believers are said to be *members of Christ*, *1 Cor. vi. 15*. Thus this union is a full union, and as it is a full, so it is a very near union. Next to those two great unions, the essential union, the the union of the three Persons in one and the same divine essence, and the personal union, the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ; this is the nearest union. Hence it is expressed, sometimes by their *being in each other*, *John xiv. 20. Ye shall know, that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you*: Sometimes by their *dwelling in each other*; *John vi. 56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*. And what can be nearer than to be, and dwell in each other? It is a nearer union than that between the husband and the wife, for that union may be broken, and is at last; but this never is, never can be broken, as in its place will be shewn.

III. This espousal, or marriage relation between Christ and believers, carries in it full and lasting communion. In marriage-relation there is a full and free communion between the parties, both in what they are, and what they have: The husband admits the wife into a participation in all he is and hath; on the other hand, he communicates with her in all she is and hath; and indeed union is in order to commu-

nion. So here, in the espousal, or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, there is a full and free communion between them in all they are and have. On the one hand, Christ communicates himself unto the believer, he admits him into a fellowship and participation with him in all his riches and fulness; hence is that, *John i. 16. Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace*: Verse 14. he is said to be *full of grace*: And what grace is that? Why, all graces, personal grace, purchased grace, grace of privilege, and grace of influence: And here it is said, that *of his fulness have we all received*; not some only, but all, great and small have received; and that not in a low, poor scanty measure only, but in great abundance; therefore 'tis added, *and grace for grace*; or grace upon grace, heaps of grace, grace in a plentiful manner, all grace needful for the soul, righteousness, remission of sins, sanctification, renovation of the Spirit, and the like. Look, whatever Christ is, or hath, which believers are capable of, it is all theirs, and they all hold communion with him therein: His beauty is theirs; and how black and deformed soever they are in themselves, yet they are fair and comely in him: Hence saith the Spouse, *I am black but comely*, Cant. i. 5. that is, black in myself, but comely in Christ; black by nature, but comely by the Redeemer's grace; *comely through the comeliness which he puts upon me*, Ezek. xvi. 14. His righteousness is theirs; and how guilty and unrighteous soever they are in themselves; yet in him they are righteous, and do stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God: Hence his name is said to be, *The Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. and they are said to be *made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. His privileges and dignities are theirs: and how vile and base soever they are in themselves, yet in him they are highly dignified and advanced. Is he a Son? are they through him: *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*, John i. 12. Is he an

heir, and heir of God? So are they, they are heirs, yea, *co-heirs with him of God*, Rom. viii. 17. Is he beloved by the Father, and that with a choice and singular love? so are they, they are beloved in him, *Ephes. i. 6.* yea, they are beloved with the same love wherewith he is beloved by the Father, *John xvii. 23.* Is he a king? So are they, he hath made them, and doth make them all kings, and they do, and shall reign with him for ever, *Rev. i. 6.* Is he in heaven, in possession of happiness and glory? so are they: Hence they are said to *sit together with him in heavenly places*, *Ephes. ii. 6.* What shall I say? his glory is theirs, *The glory which thou gavest me* (saith he to his Father) *I have given them*, *John xvii. 22.* Yea, all his divine fulness is theirs; and how empty and imperfect soever they are in themselves, yet they are perfect and complete in him, and in his fulness; *Col. ii. 9. 10.* *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; bodily, that is, truly, perfectly, unchangeably, and not typically only. as in the temple of old. All the fulness and perfection of the God-head dwelleth truly and perfectly in him: And what then? Why it follows, *and ye are complete in him*, q. d. You are poor and empty things in yourselves, but your head and Husband hath all the fulness of the God-head in him, and it is always in him; for it dwelleth in him, and it is all yours, and you do communicate with him in all, so far as you are capable of it, to complete you both in grace and glory. Thus Christ communicates himself unto the believer, and admits him into a participation with him in all he is and hath.

On the other hand, Christ partakes and holds communion with believers in all they are and have: and what is their all? Truly a poor all; in and of themselves they have nothing but sins and sorrows, guilt and affliction. Indeed, in marrying of them, he gives them gifts, graces, comforts and the ^{lib}erty and having given them these, he holds com^munion with them in all; their gifts and graces

and comforts are his: But, I say, in and of themselves they have nothing but sorrows and sins, and he in a sort holdeth communion with them in both: Hence it is said, that *in all their afflictions he is afflicted*, Isa. lxiii. 9.

He looks upon their sorrows as his, and their sufferings as his. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirstily, naked, imprisoned, &c. Matth. xxv. 42. 43.* And often (you know) in scripture, their sufferings and afflictions are called the sufferings and afflictions of Christ: And why the sufferings and afflictions of Christ? Not only, because for the most part they suffer for his sake; but also because he suffereth and is afflicted in them, and with them: He communicates with them in their afflictions: And, as in their sorrows, so also in some sort in their sins too: Hence he calls their sins, as well as their afflictions, his: *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me*, Psal. xl. 12. Which Luther and others understand of Christ, speaking of our sins, and calling them his, Not, my beloved, that he doth admit of any the least stain, or tincture of sinful defilement upon himself, but he so looks upon our sins as his, as to take them off from us, and looks upon himself responsible to the Father's justice for them: So he was said to *be made sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. O what grace is here! I close this head with a great and sweet saying, which I have read in one of the ancients, suitable to this purpose. "The like sweet
" names are not to be found, by which the sweet
" affections of Christ and the soul are expressed each
" to other, as those of the bridegroom and the bride;
" for why, all things are common with them, no-
" thing proper, having nothing separate and apart
" each from other; they have both one inheritance,
" one house, one table, one marriage-bed, also one
" flesh:" The sum is, they communicate with each other in all they are and have.

IV. This espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, carries in it strong and ardent

affection. In a marriage-relation, there is the dearest, strongest, and most intimate affection that is to be found among the children of men: 'Tis a relation made up of love: Love is not only a concomitant of marriage, but it is even a part of it, and is essential to it: In marriage, hearts must be joined as well as hands, or they are not right: So here in this spiritual Espousal, or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, there is a very dear and intimate affection each to other; their hearts are indeed knit, and do intimately cleave to one another: "The saints" (says one) are called the spouse of Christ," *propter amoris magnitudinem*; because of that great and unparallel'd love, that is between them. And it is a sweet saying, which I have read in one of the ancients to this purpose. "Christ (says he) calls himself our bridegroom, that he might insinuate the greatness of his love to us, which decays not with time; and he calls us his spouse, not his wife, noting, that our love to him should be always new, always lively and vigorous." The truth is, no love like that between Christ and his spouse; Christ loves and espouses, and the soul loves and is espoused; and both being espoused, do love for ever; and so this relation is both founded in love, and perfected in love; 'tis both made up and managed with love on all hands; Christ sets his love upon the soul, and in that love espouses him to himself, and having in this love of his espoused him to himself, then he loves him as his spouse: Often in the book of *Canticles* his spouse is called his love; as also he, on the other hand, is called her beloved: And what doth this note, but that the whole relation consists mainly in love, and that they are more dearly and intimately beloved by each other? Christ having espoused the soul to himself, now his love runs out in full streams towards him; he loves him above all the rest of the creatures, in some respects above the angels themselves, as standing in a nearer relation to him than they do. On the other hand, the souls

love is drawn out to Christ, and loving him, he is espoused to him; and being espoused to him, he loves him yet more; now *Christ is laid between his breasts*, in his most intimate affections, he has the throne in his heart. *Cant. i. 13.* Yea, the soul by degrees comes to be *sick of love* to him (as you have it.) *Cant. ii. 5.* *Stay me with flagons* (says she) *comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love*: To whom? To Christ. And truly this (as one of the ancients hath observed) *is a sweet sickness, a blessed languor, a pleasant love*: And this love between Christ and his spouse, is a chaste love, a virgin-love, a love that is pitched upon the Person, or each other; Christ loves the Person of the believer, and the believer loves the Person of Christ. Of which more in its place.

V. This espousal, or marriage relation between Christ and believers, carries in it a mutual rest and complacency for ever. In a marriage-relation there is great delight and complacency the parties have, or should have in each other, especially in the day of espousals. You know how *Solomon spake, "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe: Let her breasts satisfy thee at all Times, and be thou ravished always with her love,"* Prov. v. 18, 19. All noting that joy, rest, and complacency that that relation carries in it, and the parties have in each other: and we read (you know) of the joy of the bridegroom, as the highest and purest that is found among the sons of men: So in this spiritual espousal between Christ and believers, there is a mutual rest and complacency which they have in each other: They are, as it were, the rest, the joy, the satisfaction of each other; the solace of each other's souls. On the one hand, Christ rests and rejoices in the believer, as one would do in the wife of his youth: Thus his spouse is to him, *as a loving hind and a pleasant roe* and he lives joyfully with her: hence she is called his delight, and that as being married to him: *Thou shalt be called Hephzi-*

bath, (says he to her) *for the Lord delighteth in thee*, thou shalt be the joy and delight of my soul. *Iſa. lxi. 4.* And again, *As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee*, *verſ. 5.* The sum of all which amounts to this, that Christ marrying his people to himself, delighteth in them, and rejoices over them, and that with the highest and purest delight and complacency of all others, a delight and complacency suitable to the relation: The truth is, he speaks as if all his delight were in them, as if he had forgotten to delight in the Angels, or in any of the works of his hands but in them alone. *My goodness* (says he to the Father) *extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, in whom is all my delight*, *Plal. xvi. 2.* Yea, he declares himself ravished with them, as his spouse: *Cant. iv. 9.* *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart:* And he speaks as one ravished indeed, *Cant. vii. 6.* *How fair and pleasant art thou, O love for delights!* and *Chap. vi. 5* he acknowledges himself captivated by her, *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me;* Yea, he has declared them to be his rest, *Pſal. cxxxii. 14.* *This is my rest for ever,* (says he) *here will I dwell, for I have desired it:* 'Tis spoken of Zion, as a type of the church, and spouse of Christ, and his rest in her; and indeed they are his rest, his soul is at rest in them, in them is his highest joy. Hence that sweet word, *Zeſh. iii. 17.* *The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee is mighty; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love upon thee, he will joy over thee with singing;* as much as to say, his whole rest, solace, and delight shall be in thee. On the other hand, the believer rests and rejoices in Christ, as in his head and Husband: *I sat down under his shadow* (says the Spouse) *with great delight*, *Cant. ii. 3.* She did *ſuaviter requieſcere* (as one expresses it) sweetly rest, and repose her soul in him: Her soul was at rest, and filled with delight, great delight, she had great springing of joy.

within her, and all this in Christ her bridegroom; in his person, in his presence, in his protection, in the fruits of his grace and love: And therefore it follows, *and his fruit was sweet to my taste*; as if she would say, O with what joy, what solace, what delight and satisfaction of soul did I converse with him, and feed upon him! Thus in these espousals there is mutual delight and satisfaction between Christ and believers: and O how sweet is this! this makes this espousal to relish strongly of heaven, and to set the soul down even at the gates thereof. Thus I have shewn you what this espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers is.

C H A P. III.

In which the way and means of the accomplishment of this espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers is enquired into, and a general account thereof given.

HAVING seen somewhat of the nature of the espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers; the next thing to be enquired into is, how this espousal or relation is made up and accomplished: To be sure, naturally we are all strangers to it, and unacquainted with it, being (as the apostle speaks *without Christ*, that is without union with him, or any spiritual relation to him *Ephes. ii. 12*. But how then, and in what way is it brought about? In general, it is from divine grace, the grace of God in Jesus Christ acting and laying out itself for us and upon us; and it is from divine grace two ways; or as that grace carries a double opposition with it *First*, As it stands in opposition to any thing of worth or deserving in us; and so it flows from the riches of divine grace, as its only spring and fountain: And, *Secondly*, as that grace stands in opposition to any thing of power or ability in us; and so it is effected by the power of divine grace as its principle and ef-

Scient. Accordingly take this general in these two propositions.

1. This espousal or marriage-relation between Christ and believers, flows from the riches of divine grace, as its only spring and fountain. That any of the sons of men are married and espoused to Christ, is not from any thing of worth or deservings in them, but purely and intirely from free grace and love, dwelling and working in the heart of God and Christ towards them; and this account the scripture gives us of it, *Jer. xxi. 3. I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee*: as if he should say, I have drawn thee out of thy sins, out of thy unbelief, out of thy carnal rests and refuges, and I have drawn thee to myself, into union and communion with myself, into a marriage covenant and relation with myself, and all this from mine own free love, that love, that kindness, that has been in my heart towards thee from everlasting. So again, *Hos. ii. 19. I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies*. Mark, it is mercy and loving kindness which espouses souls to Christ. God (says one upon this place) *espouseth us to Christ, induced thereunto by no merits of ours, but by his own goodness and mercy*. And indeed my beloved, what have we, or what have any of the sons of men, that should speak the one or the other, worthy of a conjugal-relation to Christ, or that should invite and induce him to take us into such a relation to himself? Have we birth or parentage to induce him? No, alas! as to our state, we are all of the brood of hell, and thence, as sinners, we all have our descent and original, *John viii. 44*. Have we beauty and amiableness? No, for we are all black and deformed in ourselves, we have the spirit of the devil in us, and the image of the devil upon us; we are blind, and deaf, and dumb, and lame, and crooked: so the scripture speaks of us in our natural state. We are all *in our blood and gore, cast*

out into the open fields to the loathing of our persons, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. And as their case is represented, Isa. i. 6. such is ours spiritually, *Even from the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in us nothing but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores:* In a word, we are all sin, and have nothing but sin, "Know, O spouse of Christ (says one of the ancients) thou hast nothing of thyself but sins; as for all thy good things, they are the grace of my bridegroom to thee, to whom therefore give the glory of it: I say, we have nothing but sin: and is there any beauty, any comeliness in that to attract an holy Jesus? surely no. Have we riches and treasures? No; for indeed we are *poor and miserable and blind and naked,* Rev. iii. 17. Treasures, it is true, we have, but they are black ones; treasures of sin and wickedness, treasures of guilt and wrath, which surely cannot render us worthy, but most unworthy of such a relation. Have we wisdom and parts to invite him? No; we are *altogether brutish and foolish,* Jer. x. 8. *Wise we are,* but it is *to do evil; to do good we have no knowledge,* Jer. iv. 22. Have we love and kindness in us towards him, good nature? No; for naturally we love him not: Yea, we *hate him,* and are enemies to him, *Luke ix. 14.* We hate both him and the father, as he charged the *Jews* of old. yea, we are *enemies* itself to him, *Rom. viii. 7.* We are enemies to his person, to his kingdom, to his grace, to his righteousness, to his ways, and to all acquaintance and communion with him: Thus we have nothing to induce him to take us into such a relation: At the best, we are but *poor worms, whose foundation is in the dust:* And what can it be, but free and rich grace in Christ to marry and espouse such unto himself?

II. This espousal, or marriage relation between Christ and believers, is wrought and affected by the power of divine grace, as its principle and efficient: When souls are married and espoused to Christ it is not done by any power or ability of their own, nor

yet by the power and efficacy of means and instruments, but 'tis purely from the power and efficacy of divine grace: Indeed, God makes use of means and instruments, he makes use of the gospel and gospel Ministers for the espousing of sinners to his Son; and these are the only ordinary way and means whereby he doth it: Therefore says the Apostle in my text [1] *have espoused you to one husband*, that is, I by my ministry, I by preaching the everlasting gospel, have been an instrument in God's hand for your espousing to Christ. But tho' God thus makes use of means and instruments in this work, yet still the work itself is from pure grace, and to grace doth Christ attribute it, excluding all other power but this as sufficient hereunto, *John vi. 44. No man can come to me, or believe on me, close with me in a marriage-covenant, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him*; that is, except the power of divine grace be put forth upon him in order hereunto. The drawing Christ here speaks of, is comprehensive of the whole business; 'tis the enabling of us to come to Christ, to believe on him, and to close with him as our head and husband. It notes, (as one observes) not any violent coercion or constraint, but a sweet bowing of the will, which in itself was averse from, and opposite to God and Christ; and withal, a carrying of the soul to Christ, and an enabling of him to close with him in this relation, and this Christ ascribes wholly to the power of divine grace. The truth is, in and of ourselves we have no power or ability for such a work; we are *without strength*, Rom. vi. 5. Yea, when we are brought in to Christ by the power of divine grace, yet then, in and of ourselves, *we can do nothing*; so Christ tells us, *John xv. 5. Without me ye can do nothing*. Yea, when we are brought into Christ and have had some communion with him, yet we can't follow after him, nor draw one title nearer to him, unless a fresh influence of divine grace be put forth upon us, enabling us thereunto; so much the spouse was sensible of, and therefore prays.

thus, *Draw me, and we will run after thee*, Cant. i. 4. As if she should say, Lord, in myself I can't stir one foot towards thee, but do thou put forth thy power in drawing me, and then, and not till then, shall I come nearer to thee: Yea, my beloved, the espousing of souls to Christ, is not only the act or work of divine grace, and the power of it, but 'tis the act or work of the mighty power of that grace; 'tis not an ordinary power that is and must be put forth therein, but even the greatness of the power of that grace, a power no less than that which was put forth in raising Christ from the dead: So the Apostle tells us, Eph. i. 18. 19, 20. *That you may know* (says he) *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.* So then here is power, mighty power, the mighty power of God, the greatness of the mighty power of God, the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God, the same exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God, which raised Christ from the dead; and all put forth to enable us to believe, and so to close with Christ in a marriage-covenant. Thus this work is every way from divine grace. But here more particularly the enquiry will be, what those acts or works of divine grace are, by which poor sinners come to be espoused to Christ? I shall reduce them all to two heads; they are either (first) more remote, being acts of divine grace put forth for us, and toward us; or (secondly) more near, being acts of divine grace put forth in us, and upon us: In the first, the Father and Jesus Christ work more immediately by and from themselves: In the second, they work by the influence and ministry of the blessed spirit: I'll speak a little of each.

C H A P. IV.

Wherein are contained the more remote acts of divine grace. put forth more immediately by the Father and Jesus Christ. for us and towards us. in order to the accomplishment of the espousal between Christ and us.

THERE are some more remote acts of grace, acts of grace put forth more immediately by the Father and Jesus Christ, for us, and towards us in order to the making up of this espousal or marriage relation between Christ and us; and of these I shall mention five, all which do necessarily concur, and have their influence into this business, and indeed there is much of the mystery of God in them: They are these;

1. God the Father marries and espouses our nature to the person of his Son, and thereby fits and prepares him to be an husband for us; this God has done once for all, and the influence thereof concurs unto the accomplishment of the espousal between Christ and every believer; I shall illustrate this unto you from that parable, *Matth. xiii. 2.* where we read of a king that made a marriage for his son; by which king we are to understand God the Father, and by his son, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of that eternal Father. He, who proceeded from him by eternal generation. God the Father then is said to make a marriage for his son: But, pray, who is the spouse? 'Tis observed by divines, that the spouse is not here mentioned: Who or what then is she? 'Tis answered, Christ has a twofold spouse; our nature, and the persons of believers: Both which may be intended here, tho' the first chiefly and principally; and so by the marriage here, we are to understand the personal marriage, the marriage between the person of the Son of God and our nature; and so *Calvin* and others expound it: This primarily, but secondarily, and by consequence, the spiritual marriage, the marriage between Christ and believers; and we are

to look on the one as laying a foundation, and making way for the other; So that the whole resolves unto this, That God the Father hath married and espoused our nature to the person of his Son in the hypostatical union, and thereby has fitted and prepared him to be an husband for us, and made way for the marriage of our persons to his person in the spiritual union. And indeed, unless our nature had been first married to him in the one, our persons could never possibly have been married to him in the other; for, pray observe the glory of Christ considered as the eternal Son, and to as God is too bright and the distance betwixt him and us too great for us to come to him, and be made one with him in a marriage-relation; Christ considered in his own naked glory, as God, is too bright an object for us to look upon, much more to have so near an union to, and communion with; one sight of him, thus considered, is enough to swallow us up, and even to overwhelm our spirits; we cannot thus see him and live: But now our nature being married and espoused to his divine person; that is to say, he having assumed our nature into union with himself, as the eternal Son, which the Evangelist calls his being *made flesh*, John i. 14. And the apostle, *his partaking of flesh and blood*, Heb. ii. 14. Hereby the overwhelming brightness of his glory is veiled, and the dreadful terror of his greatness, together with the affrighting distance between him and us is taken away; yea, hereby his glory is brought down (as one hath it) to our eye, to our beholding; hereby he hath marvellously sweetened and endeared himself to us, and made way for us for a free access to him, and the nearest union and communion with him; hence divines give us this as one reason of Christ's incarnation, that he might thereby become a fit husband for his people, and they might be capable of union and communion with him. Therefore, (as a learned man hath observed) *as the Son of God made man, that he might be a true, a fit bridegroom for the church; and 'tis rightly observed*

by divines, that in strict propriety of speech, neither the Father, nor the holy Spirit, but the Son, the second person in the Trinity, is the church's bridegroom; and they give this reason for it, because he only was made man, he only was incarnate, O, had not the Son of God been incarnate, had he not (as *Austin's* expression is) *married our nature to himself in the womb of the virgin*, none of us had ever been capable of such a privilege, such a happiness, as a conjugal union and communion with him. That therefore is the first act of grace in this business.

II. God the Father gives Christ unto the soul, and the soul to Christ; he gives Christ for an head and husband to the soul, and he gives the soul for a bride or spouse to Christ. (*First*) He gives Christ for an head and husband to the soul; in *John iv. 10.* Christ is called *the gift of God*: And how the gift of God? Two ways, (first) in that he gave him for us; he gave him to be incarnate, to suffer, to bleed, to die, to be made sin and a curse for us; he gave him as an offering and a sacrifice for us. And (secondly) in that he gives him also to us; he gives him to be an head and husband to us: Hence 'tis said, That *he gave him to be head to the church*, and such an head as has the command and dispose of all things: *He gave him to be head over all things to the church*, *Eph. i. 22.* both in the counsel of his will from eternity, and also in the act or work of his grace here in time, he thus gives Christ to us: And O, how richly and gloriously doth his grace shine forth herein! In giving Christ to us, he gives his best and his dearest; for he has nothing better, nothing dearer to him than his Christ, as afterwards may be shewn. (*Secondly*) He gives the soul for a bride or spouse to Christ: Believers (you know) are often said to be given by the Father to Jesus Christ; *My Father which gave them me*, (says Christ concerning believers) *is greater than all*, *John x. 29.* And *thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, *John xvii. 6.* with many other places which might be mentioned. God gives all the elect to Christ to be his spouse; he gives them to him (*first*)

in the eternal purpose and counsel of his grace; in the day of everlasting love, when God first set his heart upon his chosen ones, then gave he them to his Son, and will'd their union to him in a marriage-covenant; and he gives them to him also (secondly in the work of vocation which makes way for the working of faith in Christ in the soul. *The Father* (says he) *hath given this spouse to his Son* speaking of the church) *and joins her to him by his spirit.* And, my beloved, without this act of grace put forth by God towards us, the match would never be made between Christ and any poor soul; for this indeed is that which brings the soul to Christ: So much Christ himself tells us, John vi. 37. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.* Mark, 'tis the Father's giving us to Christ, that brings us to him, and were we not by the Father given to him, we should never come to him by believing, there could never be a marriage-union and relation between him and us.

III. Christ readily approves and accepts of the Father's gift, being willing, yea, longingly desirous to espouse them unto himself, whom his Father gives him in order thereunto. In the making up of a marriage, 'tis not enough what the Father gives such or such an one to his Son, and his Son to her; but there must also be the consent of the Son; he must approve and accept of the Father's gift: and so does Christ here, he approves and accepts of the Father's gift: The Father wills the taking such and such poor sinners to wife, and accordingly gives himself to them, and them to him, and the will of Christ falls in with, and is conformed to the will of the Father herein, and so the match goes on. This you have clearly held forth, John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, come unto me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Mark, here are among others, two things; 1. Here is the Father's giving of poor sinners to Christ, and therein his will and content that they should be espoused to him, in these words, *All that the Father hath given me.* 2. Here

is Christ's approbation and acceptance of the gift of the Father, with his will and consent to espouse them to himself, in these words, *And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*; that is, I will assuredly receive him, and accept of him, I will take him into a conjugal union and relation to myself. Christ here plainly declares his acceptance of the Father's gift giving poor sinners to him to be his spouse. 'Tis a great saying, and suitable to this I am speaking, which I have read in a great divine, "The eternal will and good pleasure of God preceeds" (says he): but Christ the bridegroom cannot but will the same thing which the Father wills: his will is conformed to the Father's, and therefore does he accept us as his spouse." In a word, in this act of grace, Christ's language is such as this, "Father, dost thou give such and such poor sinners to me? and is it thy will that they should be espoused to me? Content, I do freely accept of them, and am willing to espouse them to myself for ever: 'Tis true, they are poor worthless creatures, altogether unsuitable to my dignity and greatness; but, Father, they are thy gift, and I accept them as such: True, there is no beauty in them, that I should desire them, but they are thy gift, and I will marry them and make them beautiful." And O, what grace is this!

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ not only approves and accepts of the Father's gift, but moreover he redeems them thus given to him, with the price of his own blood: he ransoms them from sin, and death, and hell, whereunto in themselves they were all in bondage; which also necessarily concurs to the accomplishment of the espousal between him and them. 'Tis observed by some, that in the eastern countries it was the manner for men to buy their wives; and indeed, so much seems to be intimated in that passage of *Saul to David*, 1 Sam. xviii. 25. Where, when he would persuade *David* to marry his daughter, in pretence at least, he sends him word, that he

desired not any dowry, but so and so; It seems then, that it was usual to expect a dowry. The same also appears from the practice of *Shechem*, Gen. xxxiv. 11, 12. where being in love with *Dinah*, *Jacob's* daughter, he proffered to give a dowry for her; *Give me* (says he) *but thy damsel to wife, and ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give it thee.* To be sure 'tis so here, Christ buys all his spouses, and gives a vast gift for them; Christ indeed is in love with poor sinners, given him by the Father, and desires to marry them to himself; but he must buy them if he means to have them, and buy them he does, and at a dear rate, he gives a great dowry for them, even his life, his blood, his glory, and all for a time. Hence he is said *to give himself for us*, Eph. v. 25. and to *purchase us by his blood*, Acts xx. 28. Hence we are said to be *bought by him with a price*, with a great price, with a price of inestimable value, even *his own most precious blood*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. The case lies thus: The elect, as well as others, were all gone into captivity, sold under sin and Satan, in bondage to death, and hell, and wrath, which is the condition of all by nature; and if Christ will have them as his spouse, he must ransom and redeem them from all; which accordingly he does: He bleeds, he dies, *he gives himself a ransom* for them, in order to the marrying of them to himself: He had indeed a mind to a spouse among the children of men, and was in love with them from all eternity, as he himself tells us, *Prov. viii. 31.* and so much in love with them, as that he does in effect say unto the Father, as *Shechem* did to *Jacob*, *Ask me never so much dowry, and I will give it.* Why, my Son, says the Father, if thou wilt have them, and marry them to thyself, thou must give thy blood, thy life for them; thou must redeem them from sin, and death, and hell, whereunto they are in bondage; which can't be done by less than by giving thyself a ransom for them; all which Christ assents unto, and complies with, and that with delight, freely giving himself for them. And O, what

grace is this! Oh, to give such a price for such a spouse! a price so great for a spouse so black and unworthy; this is a glorious grace indeed.

V. Christ makes love to them, tenders himself unto their embraces, and withal wooeth them for their acceptance of him, and that with the greatest and most affectionate importunity: How much soever it has cost Christ to redeem poor sinners, and how great a dowry soever he has given for them, yet they are unwilling to close with him, they have no mind, no heart Christward, and so the match is not like to be made up, unless something further be done; therefore after all, Christ (as one phrases it) comes a wooing to them, he makes love, offering himself to them, and earnestly solicites them for their love and acceptance; he importunes them, and that in such a way, as if he were resolved to take no denial; in *Ezek. xvi. 8.* we read of a *time of love*, a time, (that is) of Christ's making love to sinners lying in their blood and gore. And indeed, Christ has times of love, times when he makes love, and offers himself with all his riches and treasures to poor sinners; when his language to them is, *Behold me, behold me*, *Isa. lxxv. 1.* and *look upon me, and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth*, *Isa. xlv. 22.* Now he comes, and tells over the stories of his love to them, how much he has done and suffered for them, how much his desire is towards them, and what great things he will bestow upon them, and intate them into, and all to win and allure them to himself, to gain their love and consent to accept of him, and to be his in a marriage covenant. Time was when Christ came, and did this himself in person; when he stood, and cried, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*, *John vii. 37.* Time was, when in his own person he importuned poor sinners from day to day, he made love to them time after time, as he did (you know) to *Jerusalem*, *Matth. xxiii. 39.* For some years together he wooed them, and offered himself and his grace to them in his own person; and tho' he does not now come in

person; yet, as *David* sent his servants to *Abigail*, to commune with her, and to acquaint her with his purpose and desire to take her to wife, 1 Sam. xxv. 39. So Christ sends us his servants, his ministers, to poor sinners to commune with them, and to declare the love and purposes of his heart towards them, and to woo them for him, and, as *ambassadors for Christ*, we do woo poor souls; and as in *Christ's* stead, beseech them to be reconciled to God, to give up their names and souls to Christ in a marriage-covenant, 2 Cor. v. 20. And because we can prevail nothing by and of ourselves upon the spirits of men in this great matter; Christ over and above, sends his own blessed Spirit to woo them, and gain upon them, making them willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3. And this leads me to the consideration of those other acts of grace in this business, wherein the Father and Jesus Christ work by the Spirit in us and upon us, for the making up of the match between Christ and us: Only, by the way, let us still see and admire the grace of Jesus Christ to poor sinners. O, that he should woo such poor vile creatures as we are, and make love to us! Should you see a king, a great king wooing a beggar, coming now himself in person, and then sending his servants to her to sollicit and importune her love, you would look on this to be great grace: But O, this is nothing to the grace of Christ, in condescending to woo such as we are, sinners, lying in our blood.

C H A P. V.

Which gives us an account of those (which I call) more near acts of grace, which the Father, and Jesus Christ by the Spirit, do put forth in us and upon us, for the effecting of the espousals between Christ and us.

DIVINE grace has not yet done its work; no there are other acts which it does, and must put forth, if ever the marriage be made up between Christ and us; and these I call more near, because

they are wrought in us and upon us, and do more immediately conduce to the tying of the marriage-knot between Christ and the soul: And as in the former, the Father and Jesus Christ wrought more immediately of and by themselves; so in these the blessed Spirit's influence comes in, and his grace shews itself, they in these acting by him; and the truth is, the match is all this while but half made: but now God comes, and by his spirit working in and upon the soul, carries on and compleats it; which he does by these five acts of grace.

1. The soul is, by the spirit of God divorced from its old husband, the law, and thereby is fitted and prepared for an espousal to Christ. Naturally we are all married to another husband, even to the law; and we must be divorced from that, or we can never be married and espoused to Christ; so much the Apostle clearly holds forth Rom. vii. 4. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.* Pray mark, *married to another*; The law then was their husband, to which they were married; and that they must be dead to, and divorced from, if ever they would be married to Jesus Christ; look, says he, (for 'tis his own argument and allusion in ver. 2. 3.) as a woman can't be the wife of two husbands at once; but her present husband must be dead before she can be married to another; so neither can a soul be espoused to these two husbands at once, the law and Christ, but he must be dead to, or divorced from the one, e'er he can be married to the other; observe, *ye are dead to the law*; what is it to be dead to the law, or divorced from the law? To be dead to the law, is to have no hope, no expectation of life and righteousness by the law: 'tis to be sensible that the law cannot save us; yet there is more in it than so. To be dead to the law, is to see ourselves dead by the law; 'tis to see ourselves lost and condemned by the law,

for sin, as the transgression thereof; and thus we must all be dead to the law, or divorced from the law, or we cannot be married to Christ. Now this the spirit of God effects by a work of the law upon the conscience; he divorces the soul from the law, by the law, *i. e.* by bringing home the law to the conscience: This the Apostle felt in his own soul, *I through the law* (says he) *that is, the spirit of God bringing home the law to my conscience, am dead to the law,* Gal. ii. 19. So again, *Rom. vii. 9. I was alive without the law once; but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* I was alive without the law once, that is, I thought myself to be alive, I apprehended my state to be good and happy; but this was without the law, *i. e.* before the spirit of God, by the ministry of the law, convinced me of my sin and misery; therefore it follows, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; *i. e.* when the law came in its convincing power through the spirit upon my soul, then I saw my sinful, dead and miserable state: thus was he himself divorced from the law, that he might be married to Christ. The sum is this, the spirit of God comes and shews the soul the strictness and holiness, the purity and spirituality of the law, and makes him sensible how large the duty is that it requires, how impossible it is for him to keep it, and how many ways he has broken it; he withal lets him see the dreadfulneſs of that curse and condemnation it has justly laid him under for the breach thereof; and thus he is divorced from it: And this is all one with the Spirit's convincing us of sin, and our lost and miserable condition by reason thereof, which is (you knew) his first work in order to faith, and so to our espousing to Christ, *John xvi. 8.* Thus by the spirit of God the soul is divorced from the law, he is taken off from all expectations of life and happiness, by that, and is made to see his own sinfulness, and so his infinite need of Christ, whereby he is fitted for this other and better husband.

II. The soul being thus divorced from the law, and so fitted and prepared for Christ, then the spirit of God reveals and offers the Lord Jesus Christ in the promise of the gospel, as a better husband to him: Now the blessed spirit comes, and does as *Abraham's* servant did, who was sent to take a wife for *Isaac*; he told *Rebecca* of his master's greatness, of his flocks, and his herds, his silver, and his gold, his men-servants, and his maid-servants, and withal, that he had given all to *Isaac*, Gen. xxiv. 35, 36. So the spirit of God now sets before the soul the riches and the greatness, the beauty and the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ: He tells them what a full, what a sweet, what a rich, what an amiable one he is, and withal tenders him to his embraces; he reveals and offers him to him, as one full of grace and truth, as one that has all fulness dwelling in him, all fulness of life and peace, of righteousness and salvation, as one every way able to save him to the very utmost, which is, that which Christ calls his *convincing the world of righteousness*, John xvi. 9. he reveals and offers him to him in the transcendent beauty, excellency and amiableness of his person on the one hand; as also in the glorious fulness, largeness, and sufficiency of his grace and righteousness on the other hand: Thus (I say) he reveals and offers Christ unto the soul, and withal, opens his glory, and causes it to shine forth before him; so that now the soul sees that in Christ, that fulness, that beauty, that love, that amiableness, that sweetness, which he never saw before; Christ is now another thing in the soul's eye than ever before he was. Now the soul, as those, *John i. 14. Behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth*: Yea, not only does he thus reveal Christ unto the soul, but withal fixes the soul's eye upon him; he makes him to pore and gaze upon Christ, as the most excellent and amiable object, and as one infinitely needful for him; and this is called a *seeing of the Son*, and that in order to believing; *Whoever seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall*

have everlasting life, John vi. 40. The blessed spirit deals by the soul herein, as God, by the angel did with *Hagar*, Gen. xxi. 19. where it is said, *He opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water for her relief*: She was in a very distressed condition, as you may see, ver. 15. 16. full of bitterness, she and her child both in a perishing condition, being in the wilderness; and her water in the bottle being spent: Now God shews her a well of water, whence she fetches a full supply. So here, the poor soul having been under the convincing power of the law, sees himself in a woful, miserable, distressed condition; whereupon he is full of bitterness, crying out with *Hagar*, *How shall I see the child die?* How can I bear to perish eternally? But now the spirit of God comes, and opens his eyes, and shews him Christ, and Christ as infinitely suitable to him; Look, says the spirit to the soul, being now desolate and undone; look, here is a Saviour for thee, a husband for thee, another and a better husband than the law could ever have been, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is infinitely able to pay all thy debts, to supply all thy wants, to heal all thy wounds, to relieve all thy distresses, to pardon all thy sins, to satisfy all thy desires, to answer all thy love, and to give thee perfect happiness and satisfaction in and with himself for ever: Look here he is, here he is in the promise, here he is in the covenant, here he is in the tender and invitation of the gospel; here he is at the very door of the heart, knocking and calling for admission thereunto, *Rev. iii. 20.* Here he is with his arms wide open to receive and embrace thee; and that notwithstanding all thy vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness: Look therefore to him, and be saved.

III. With this tender and revelation of Christ unto the soul, the spirit of God comes and works a secret love and longing in the soul after Christ! he does not make a naked tender and revelation of Christ only to the soul; for that were not enough, but he withal gives him a secret touch, whereby he is made to breath and long after Christ, to move a little Christward;

He drops a little myrrh upon the handle of the lock, as it were, whereby he is drawn out in holy longings and breathings after sweet Jesus; as you know the case sometimes was with the spouse, Cant. v. 1. and this the scripture calls an hungering and thirsting after Christ, and has a blessedness annexed to it, Matth. v. 6. and frequently elsewhere. Yea, such is that secret touch, which in and with those tenders and revelations of Christ the Spirit of God gives the soul, as that (like that of the loadstone to the needle) which sets it a trembling, and will not suffer it to rest, till it stands fully pointed Christward; yea, till it finds itself in the very bosom and embraces of that beloved; 'tis indeed such as by degrees make the soul sick of love, and longings after Christ, Cant. v. 8. and he cries out for Christ, as Rachael sometimes did for children; Give me children (said she) or else I die: So, give me Christ, says the soul, or else I die, I perish, and that for ever; In a word, nothing but Christ will satisfy him; send him to the creatures, send him to his own duties and services, send him to his highest accomplishments and attainments, and without Christ they will not do; yea, all these he accounts but as dung, as dogs meat; that he may win Christ, Phil. iii. 8. Indeed, heaven and earth, with all the fulness of both, are nothing to him without Christ; and an union with Christ; his language now is, O Christ! Christ above ten thousand worlds: O that Christ were mine! O that I had union with him! O that I were in his embraces! O how happy are they that are married to him! and how happy should I be, could I call him mine? This I say is his language, and when once it comes to this, then things work well indeed, then the match is in a good forwardness, there being but an hairs breadth, as it were, between Christ and the soul. Therefore,

IV. The soul being thus inclined Christ-ward, and drawn forth in holy longings after union and communion with him: the spirit of God comes and enables him to believe, he carries the soul to Christ in

a way of believing, whereby he actually closes with him, and is espoused unto him: For, my beloved 'tis faith which ties the marriage-knot, and makes up the marriage-union between Christ and us. Hence Christ is said *to dwell in our hearts by faith*, Ephes. iii. 17. Christ dwelling in our hearts, notes the nearest union and communion between him and us. And how comes he thus to dwell in our hearts? why by faith, by our believing on him. Hence also, Christ tells us, *That he that eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in him, and he in him*, John vi. 56. By eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, is meant, our believing on him; and so he himself expounds it; for he makes eating and drinking of him, and believing on him, all one throughout that Chapter: Now (says he) *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*; that is, he has the nearest union and communion with me. 'Tis faith then (you see) that unites, and so espouses us to Christ: Faith gives Christ an inlet into the soul, and it gives the soul an inlet into Christ, and so they are made one, and married together. By believing, we consent to take Christ, and actually do take him for our only head and husband for ever; and so the match is made up between him and us: "We by faith (says a learned man) wrought in us by the holy Spirit, consent unto this marriage with Christ:" Christ, as you heard before, consents thereunto; as God he consented hereunto from all eternity, and as man he consents hereunto in time. For, as divines observe, Christ has a double will, his divine and human: With the first, he consented to this espousal from eternity; with the second, he consents hereunto in time, and never changes therein. Now, as Christ gives his consent, so we must also give ours, which we do by believing in him; by which therefore the match is made up between him and us. Now, there is a threefold act of faith, which the spirit of God works in the soul, whereby he more especially closes with Christ, and

is espoused unto him, made one with him in a marriage-covenant.

I. An act of choice or election.

II. An act of trust or dependance.

III. An act of resignation or subjection.

I. An act of choice or election: In the act or work of believing the soul is by the spirit of God made solemnly and deliberately to chuse Christ as his only head and husband, his Lord and Saviour being thus offered to him in the gospel. Choice or election, as the school men tell us, is an act of the will, whereby it pitches upon some one thing, and prefers that before all others in order to such or such an end: Accordingly we may conceive of this act of faith we are speaking of: It lies thus; the will is by the Spirit of God sweetly and powerfully determined upon Christ, preferring him for an head and husband, a Lord and Saviour before all others; It singles him out, as it were from all others, whether persons or things, in heaven and earth, and embraces him as the best husband, the best Saviour, the best Lord; There are others which make love to him, and tender themselves to his embraces, as sin, self, the law, the world, with its inticements; but he passes by all, yea, rejects all with loathing and indignation, and pitches upon Christ as infinitely best, saying to him, *I will have none in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.* This the scripture calls sometimes *a laying hold upon Christ*, Prov. iii. 18. Sometimes *a receiving* or embracing of Christ, John i. 12. 'Tis true, in the work of faith, Christ is and must be received into the understanding, but he is most properly said to be received into our will and affections: Christ in the gospel is revealed and offered to the soul with all his riches, fulness and perfections; he is tendered to him as a full, a mighty, and uttermost Saviour, as one who has not only an infinite fulness and sufficiency in him to redeem and save, but also an infinite suitableness and amiableness in him to endear and delight the

soul; and accordingly the soul accepts and embraces him, he cleaves to him and fastens upon him, resolving to have none but him alone; his language of him now is, there is none like Christ no head like his head, no husband like this husband, no saviour like this saviour for my soul: This is the head, the husband, the saviour that I need, and that indeed my soul desires. No love like this love, no beauty like this beauty, no blood like his blood, no righteousness like his righteousness, no fulness like his fulness; He therefore, and he alone shall be my head, my husband, my saviour, and my all for ever. Sweet Jesus (says he) dost thou tender thyself for an head and husband to me, and art thou willing to be embraced by me? Lo, then I do with my whole soul accept of thee, and that for all times, and in all conditions, with all thine holiness as well as thy love, with all thy inconveniences as well as thy privileges; to suffer for thee, as well as to reign with thee; and this the soul does upon the deepest counsel, and most mature deliberation; and accordingly he abides by his choice for ever.

II. An act of trust or dependance: As in the work of faith the soul is, by the Spirit of God, made to chuse Christ; so also to trust and depend upon him for all grace, righteousness and salvation. Now it bottoms upon Christ, and anchors upon Christ, rests and relies upon Christ for all life and peace, for all grace on earth, and glory in heaven: He lays the whole weight and stress of his salvation upon him: He commits all to him, ventures all upon him, expects all from him: this the scripture calls sometimes *a trusting in Christ*, Eph. i. 13. sometimes *a leaning upon Christ*, Cant. viii. 5. sometimes *a hoping in Christ*. 1 Cor. xv. 19. And in this respect Christ is called *our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. our hope, that is, the object of our hope and trust, as to life and salvation, the soul has no hope in himself, no hope in the creature, no hope in the law, or first covenant, no hope in any thing in heaven or earth on this side Christ:

He looks here and there, to this and that, but he can find no solid ground of hope, no bottom to build or rest upon for life and salvation; but then he turns his eye upon Christ, and there he sees abundant ground of hope; he beholds him upon the cross, and there's hope; he beholds him upon the throne and there's hope; he looks upon him dying, and there's hope; he looks upon him rising, ascending, sitting at the Father's right hand making intercession for us, and there's hope: He looks upon the infinite virtue of his blood, the infinite efficacy of his Spirit, the infinite fulness of his grace, the infinite dimensions of his love, the infinite freeness and faithfulness of his promise; and in these he sees infinite ground of hope and trust, and accordingly he rolls and ventures all upon him: Here I'll build (says he) here I'll bottom, here I'll rest, here I'll hang and depend, here I'll live; yea, and if die I must, here I'll die. His language to Christ now, is like that of the *Psalmist* to God in another case, *Psal xxxix. 17* *Now Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.* This is to cast anchor within the veil, *Heb. ix. 6*. And indeed 'tis with poor souls many times, as with persons at sea; the storm arises, the waves lift up themselves, which beating upon them, they are ready to sink every moment and their very soul is melted because of heaviness; but anon, they found bottom, cast anchor, and are at rest; So poor souls are under storms of sin, guilt, and wrath, perishing in their own apprehension every moment; but anon they drop an anchor of hope upon Christ, and do rest upon him; or 'tis with them in this case, as 'twas with the dove when she was first sent out of the ark, she found no resting place abroad for the sole of her foot; but at length returned to the ark, and there found rest, *Gen. viii. 8, 9*. So the poor guilty soul finds no rest any where but in Christ. His language in this act of faith is such as this, I am a poor, lost, sinful, distressed creature, and there is but one door I can expect relief from, and that is Christ, and at this door I'll ly

in wait; I know he is able to help me, for he can save to the uttermost; and surely he hath bowels, great bowels towards poor sinners; he is a merciful high-priest. He says concerning him, as they sometimes did concerning the king of Israel, *Behold we have heard that the king of Israel is a merciful king, peradventure he will save us*: Yea he has bid me look to him and be saved; and he invites all them that are weary, and heavy laden, to come to him, and promises them rest, Why then should I not rest and rely upon him? 'Tis true, I am a mighty sinner, but he is a more mighty Saviour: Have I sinned to the utmost? He has satisfied to the utmost; What shall I say? True, I am death, but Christ is life; I am darkness, but Christ is light; I am sin, but Christ is holiness; I am guilt, but Christ is righteousness; I am emptiness and nothingness, but Christ is fulness and sufficiency; I have broken the law, but Christ has fulfilled the law; and his life is infinitely able to swallow up my death; his light, my darkness; his holiness, my sin; his righteousness my guilt; his fulness, my emptiness; on him therefore I'll lean, and live, and hope. 'Tis true, I am utterly unworthy of any life, any grace, any favour; but Christ does all for sinners freely, he loves freely, he pardons freely, he saves freely; how vile therefore and unworthy soever I am, yet I will rest and depend upon him, who knows but he may cast an eye of love upon me? This is that act of faith which is held forth, *Isa. lxx. 24. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* I have neither strength nor righteousness of my own, but I have all righteousness and strength in Christ; all righteousness for pardon and justification, and all strength for holiness and sanctification, this is that the apostle calls a *rejoicing in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh*, *Phil. iii. 3*.

To draw towards a conclusion of this head: which way soever the soul looks on this side Christ, he meets with nothing but discouragement: If he looks to

himself, there he sees nothing but sin and guilt, blackness and deformity; in his heart he sees a fountain of sin, an abyss of sin, a very hell of sin and wickedness; in his life he finds innumerable evils, sins of a crimson dye and scarlet tincture staring him in the face; yea, his very duties are not without sin, even in these there is abundance of pride, formality, unbelief, and the like: His very *righteousness, are as filthy rags*, Isa. lxi. 4. If he looks unto the law, there he reads his doom and condemnation in every line thereof; there he finds himself under the curse: there he sees nothing but *fear, and blackness, and darkness, and tempests*, Heb. xii. 18. If he looks to justice, that he finds as a naming sword keeping him from the tree of life, from all happiness: That appears with an angry frowning countenance, demanding satisfaction, as being infinitely wronged: But now in the midst of all these discouragements, the poor soul at length gets a sight of Christ, in whom he sees encouragement after all: He discovers land in a storm, as it were, and finds him in a bottom to rest his weary spirit upon; in him he sees that which can atone God, satisfy justice, answer all the demands of the law, fully deliver him from sin and guilt, and make him both holy and happy for ever; and accordingly he rests and rolls himself upon him, resolving that if he dies, he will die thus leaning upon this beloved.

III, An act of resignation or subjection. As in the work of faith the soul thus chuses Christ, and depends upon him, so also he is by the spirit of God made cordially and unreservedly to resign up himself unto him, to be ruled, governed, and disposed of by him in his own way: The soul now puts himself out of his own power and possession, he passes himself away for himself, and he gives up himself into the power and possession of Jesus Christ, to be ruled, governed, and saved by him as he sees good: which is properly that act of faith which we call resignation, and this the scripture often mentions, *One shall say I*

am the Lord's, Isa. xlv. 5. that is, he shall give or resign up himself to the Lord to be for ever his. and at his dispose; so 2 Cor. viii. 5. *They gave themselves unto the Lord*: and Ephes. v. 24 the church is said to be *subject to Christ*: The case seems to be this, there having many treaties past in order to a match between Christ and the soul; the soul at length, thro' the help of the divine Spirit, is made freely to consent to take Christ for his only head and husband, and to be subject to him in all things, to be perfectly and eternally at his dispose. His language now to Christ, is like that of *Ahab to Benhadad*, 1 Kings xx. 4. *Behold I am thine, and all that I have is thine*: Sweet Lord Jesus, says the soul, I have been my own, and have lived too much in mine own will, and to my own ends and interests, but now I desire to be thine, and to live in thy will, and to thine ends; take possession of me, save me, rule me, lead me, dispose of me as thou pleasest, and do all thy pleasure in me, pull down and set up what thou wilt, I'll be, and do, and suffer what thou wilt have me to be, and do, and suffer. And this is properly that act of faith, whereby we close with Christ as a Lord and a King, and is indeed the evidence of the truth of the two former; for you must know, that though faith's first aspect be to Christ as a Saviour, yet it comes to eye him as a Lord and King also. As faith fully bottoms upon the satisfaction of Christ, so it freely bows to the scepter of Christ; yea, when faith can't challenge Christ as a Saviour, yet it will own Christ as a Lord. You know how *Laban* spake to *Abraham's* servant upon the sight of the ear-rings and bracelets, which he had given his sister *Rebekah*, and upon his hearing a relation from her of his discourse with her, *Come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? I have room for thee*, Gen. xxiv. 31. In like manner does the soul speak to Christ, upon the sight of that worth that is in him, and that need which she has of him; come in thou blessed of the Lord, come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? I have

room for thee in my understanding, and in my will and affections; and I would have thee possess all, and command all: In a word, the soul freely gives up himself to Christ's holy and spiritual government. Thou art an holy Christ, (says he) who is to reign, and I resign up myself to thee, I will have no Lord but thee; take the whole throne to thyself within me; I know thy yoke is an easy yoke, and I desire to bear it; thy scepter is a righteous scepter, and I desire to bow to it; thy kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and I heartily desire to come under the power of it. I would be sanctified as well as justified; I desire thy spirit to subdue my corruptions for me, and to make me holy, as well as thy blood to wash away my guilt for me, and ingratiate me with thyself: and this is what the scripture calls, *an opening of the gates, and lifting up of the everlasting doors, to let Christ the king of glory in*, Psal. xxiv. 7. Thus by these three, which indeed are the great united acts of faith, the spirit of God enables the soul to close with Christ in a marriage-covenant, and relation.

V. The soul being thus enabled to believe, and so close with Christ in a marriage-covenant; then us the crown and perfection of all, the blessed spirit of God, takes up his abode, and dwells for ever in that soul, as the pledge and everlasting bond of this marriage-union and relation between them. The sweet spirit does not only come as a friend, to treat about the match, and also to tie the Marriage-knot between Christ and us; but moreover, this being done, he remains himself in the soul, as a love-token from Christ to him, as the pawn and pledge of this espousal, and as the everlasting bond and confirmation of this marriage-union and relation: Hence that of the Apostle, *He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. one spirit with the Lord he is joined to; that spirit which did join him to Christ, does remain in him and in Christ both: Christ leaves his own spirit in his spouses as the pledge and bond of

that marriage-union that is between him and them; so that he and they have the same Spirit dwelling in them; yet with this difference, he dwells in Christ without measure, in us by measure; in Christ immediately, by virtue of the personal union, in us by his gifts and graces; in Christ as an head, in us as members, and he with these are the love-tokens, the pawns and pledges of his marriage troth plighted between Christ and us; and this indeed is that which makes this union so strong and inviolable, as that it can never be broken: Yea, not only does he remain in the soul as the pledge and bond of this union, but also to deck and adorn the soul with grace, and to make him ready for the consummation of the marriage above: You know, when *Abraham's* servant saw that *Rebekah* consented to be *Isaac's* wife, he then gave her *jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and rich raiment*, Gen. xxiv. 53. So the blessed spirit of God having gained the souls consent to be espoused to Christ, and the marriage-knot being tied between them, now he dwells in the soul to deck and adorn him; now he gives him jewels of gold and silver, furnishes and beautifies him with all divine and heavenly graces: He dwells in him as an indeficient spring and fountain of all grace and gracious dispositions, till he has lodged him safe in the arms and bosom of his sweet husband above. Thus at length, the espousal or marriage relation is made up between Christ and the soul. And O how blessed is the soul that is thus espoused to him! I must say to such a soul, blessed be the day that ever thou wert born; blessed the womb that bare thee; and blessed the paps which gave thee suck; blessed gospel which revealed this sweet Christ to thee. and blessed spirit that has tied this happy knot between him and thee.

C H A P VI.

Being a call to, and treaty with souls, in order to an espousal between Christ and them.

WELL, and what is the meaning of all this? Surely, it should have a mighty influence upon the spirits of men, to draw and allure them to Christ, to induce them at least to look after an acquaintance with this blessed espousal to him; and indeed I would take occasion hence to treat with eternal souls, in order to a match between Christ and them; and O that I could do it effectually! Look, my beloved as *David* sent his servants to *Abigail* to commune with her, in order to his taking her to wife, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 39, 40. so has the Lord *Jesus* sent me, his poor unworthy servant, to you this day to commune with you in order to the espousing you to himself; and O that you would do in this case, as she did in that, for *she hastned* ('tis said) *and arose and went to David, and became his wife*, ver. 42. O that you would all arise, arise out of your sins, arise out of your unbelief, arise out of your carnal security, and go to Christ, and become his spouse: And not only so, but, as she did make haste in the business, close speedily with him in a marriage covenant, even to day; O blessed day, might I succeed as they did! How happy would it be for you! how comfortable for me! and how joyful for us all in the day of the bridegroom's coming! Sirs, let me say, O that I might say of you, as *Paul* of his *Corinthians* here, *I have espoused you to one husband, even to Christ*. And why should it not be thus? Why should you not rise and go with me to sweet *Jesus*, and be espoused unto him? Can you make light of all that love, that comfort, that sweetness, that happiness, that blessed union and communion, that delight, solace and complacency of soul which this espousal carries in it? Or, is there any thing can make up the loss of these? Can sin and the creature afford any thing compar-

able hereunto? Surely there is more sweetness, more happiness in one kiss of the mouth of this blessed Lord, in one embrace of his bosom, one moment's communion with him, than in all the delights of sin and the creature; if you doubt it, come and see. Experienced souls will tell you, that one descent of love from Christ, one beam of the light of his countenance, one turn with him in his galleries, is infinitely beyond all earthly delight whatsoever. Again, can you be content to die, and perish eternally, rather than live, and be made happy in such a sweet and desirable way as this of being espoused to Christ is? A more sweet and desirable way of being made happy than this of an espousal to Christ, surely neither men nor angels could ever have thought on; And can you, O eternal souls be content to die, to perish, to be damned and miserable for ever, rather than be saved and made happy this way? If you get not union with, and a marriage-relation to this sweet Lord, you must die and perish for ever; *Know you not* (says the apostle) *that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. If Christ be not in us, we are certainly reprobates, we are rejected of God, and out of his favour, and then surely we must perish. Naturally we are all dead, all lost, all condemned; *Judgment is come upon all men to condemnation,* Rom. v. 18. and *we are all the children of wrath by nature,* Eph. ii. 3. And if ever we be justified and saved, it must be by a marriage-union and relation to Christ. *There is no condemnation* (says the Apostle) *or, as the words are, nothing of condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,* Rom. viii. 1. But as is there implied, there is nothing but condemnation to them that are out of Christ Jesus. Once more; can you be content to be shut out from the marriage at last for ever? Think of that scripture, and bear the dread of it if you can, *Matth. xxv. 10. And they that were ready, went unto the marriage, and the door was shut; shut against others who then would gain enter: To be shut out from the marriage-*

supper at last, is to be shut out from God, from Christ, from the comforter, from all the saints and angels, from all happiness, yea, and from all hopes of happiness for ever; and thus you must expect to be shut out from the marriage at last, if you come not into an espousal to him here. And can you bear it, think you? Can you be content to hear Christ say unto you at last, *Depart from me, depart*. You would have none of me on earth, though I wooed and besought you with tears; and therefore now you shall have none of me in heaven; you might have been happy in an union and communion with me and the arms of my love were open to have received you, but you would not; therefore now *depart from me, I know you not*: And can you bear this? Besides, what is it that keeps your soul from a close with Christ in this marriage relation? A vain world, a filthy lust, a painful perishing pleasure, a sensual appetite: And are these better than Christ? Are these indeed things to be laid in the ballance by you against Christ, yea, and to weigh down him in your values? O monstrous stupidity! In short, sirs, the matter I am treating with you about, is no trifle, 'tis of no less moment and importance to you than eternal life or death, eternal salvation or damnation comes to; your eternal all depends upon it, for you must live or die, be saved or damned eternally, according as you do, or do not close in with Christ in a marriage union and relation here: why then should you stand off from him? Yea, why should not this be the day of espousals between him and you? Oh, be not shy, be not coy to Christ, but embrace his love: surely his arms are wide open to receive you, his heart is upon you, and his desire is towards you; *Lift up therefore the everlasting doors, and let this King of glory in*: Give up your names and souls unto him for ever. Some of you are young, and have your affections green and fresh: O that you would now go with me to sweet Jesus, and become his spouse; you cannot love him, nor be married to him too soon: O, let him have your

hearts before this world hath defiled and debauched them. Others of you are older, and have outstood the calls and offers of Christ long; yet lo, he once more tenders himself to you; O now close with him, and all will be well yet. But for the better succeeding of this treaty, I shall, in the managing of it, speak three things, 1. I'll shew you what manner of husband the Lord Jesus Christ is, and how he is qualified to render him desireable in that relation. 2. I'll shew you what great things he does for all his spouses. 3. I'll shew you how much his heart is upon a match with you. And now, as *Abraham's* servant, when he was to get a wife for *Isaac*, prayed, saying, *O Lord God of my master Abraham, send me good speed this day*, Gen. xiv. 12. so would I upon the bended knees of my soul pray, O Lord God, the God and Father of my royal master Jesus Christ, send me good speed this day, that I may win, through thy grace, a spouse for him.

C H A P. VII.

Which shews what manner of husband Christ is, and how qualified for the endearing of him to souls, and rendering him desirable in a conjugal union.

WHAT is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou so dost charge us? So the daughters of *Jerusalem* spake unto the spouse, *Cant.* v. 9. In like manner may some say unto me; Who or what is this Christ, that you do so press us to an espousal with him? What is there in him to render him desireable to us? Who, or what is he? Truly I can't tell, nor could I, had I the tongue of men and angels; and I am almost afraid to speak of him, lest I should darken his glory instead of displaying it: This I am sure of, he is (as one speaks of him) earth's wonder, and heaven's wonder both; and has all that in him, and that in infinite eminency and perfection, that should render him grateful and desireable to souls in a conjugal relation: Look therefore upon him, and

view him a little, and see if there be any thing you can desire in such a relation that is wanting in him. I'll lay this more fully before you in these following particulars.

1. Are you for dignity and greatness? This goes far among men, and makes many a match: for this none like Christ, none so great, so glorious, so honourable as he: Pray view him a little: as to his descent, *He came forth from God*, viz. by eternal generation, and is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, *John xvi. 28.* View him in his person, and there you will see nothing but greatness; for he is no other than God-man, and has all the excellencies of both natures in one person: he is *Emmanuel, God with us*, God in our nature, *Matth. i. 23.* He is *God*, *Heb. i. 8.* *The true God*, *John v. 20.* *The great God*, *Titus ii. 13.* *The mighty God*, *Isa. ix. 6.* *God over all, or the most high God*, *Rom. ix. 5.* *God equal with the Father*, having the same divine essence, and essential perfections in him, that the Father hath in him, *Phil. ii. 6.* *He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Character of his person*; one in whom the whole Majesty, Lustre, and Glory of the Father shines forth; one, on whom the Father has engraven all his eternal Excellencies, *Heb. i. 3.* Some small beams and rays of God's glory do shine forth in the saints and angels; but in Christ the fulness, lustre, and brightness of it appears. View him in his office and relation with the dignity that even here he is advanced unto: He is a king, a great king, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, *Rev. xix. 6.* *King of saints*, *Rev. xv. 3.* *King of nations*, *Jer. x. 7.* *King of glory*, *Psal. xxiv. 7.* *He is the head of all principalities and powers*; and 'tis their glory that they have such an head, *Col. ii. 10.* *He is the fellow of the Lord of hosts*, *Zech. xiii. 7.* *He is the first born of God, higher than the kings of the earth*, *Psal. lxxxix. 27.* *He is set down at God's own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion*, *Eph. i. 20.* *He is made higher than the heavens,*

Heb. vii. 26. Among all persons, and in all things whether in heaven or earth, he has the preheminnence; *Col. i. 18.* Such is his greatness, that the whole creation is bound to perform homage and worship to him, the angels themselves not excepted: *Let all the angels of God worship him,* says the Father, *Heb. i. 6.* and *Phil. ii. 9, 10.* *God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; i. e.* Angels as well as men must perform worship to him: And indeed a refusal so to do, would turn angels into devils: He is beloved, feared, believed on, obey'd, pray'd unto, praised, admired, and delighted in by all: He is to have equal honour from all with the Father; *All must honour the Son as they honour the Father,* John v. 23. What shall I say? He has the sovereign lordship and disposal both of grace and glory in his hand, *the Son quickneth whom he will,* John v. 21. He says unto one, live, and he lives; and to another, live, and he lives; and the rest of the dead lives not: *He has the keys of death and hell,* Rev. i. 18. He has the government of the whole world in his hand; *His kingdom ruleth over all,* Psal. ciii. 19. He is in full possession of a kingdom over the whole creation, *all judgment being committed to him,* John v. 22. And O how glorious is he in the whole of it! "Glorious in his throne, which is at the right hand of God, *Heb. i. 3.* Glorious in his commission, which is all power in heaven and earth, *Matth. xxviii. 18.* Glorious in his scepter, which is a scepter of righteousness, *Psal. xlv. 6.* Glorious in his attendants, ten thousand times ten thousand of his holy ones, even thousands of angels, *Dan. vii. 10.* Glorious in his way of rule, full of grace and sweetness towards his people, full of terror and majesty towards his enemies, his arrows being sharp in their hearts, *Psal. xlv. 5."* And as he governs all now, so he will judge all at last: and all must stand or fall, live or die, be saved or damned for ever,

according to what sentence he shall pass upon them, *Acts xvii. 31. Rom. xli. 10.* O how great is this Lord! and how worthy to be embraced by us! O sirs, will you deny so great, so glorious a person, when he makes love to you? Shou'd you see some great prince wooing a beggar in rags upon the dunghill, you would wonder to see her slight him, and make him wait time after time upon her: Why, there is an infinitely greater person than the greatest of kings that woes you, and solicites you for your love: And will you yet be shy of him, and make him wait? Will you refuse him? Then wonder at your own fordid ingratitude.

II. Are you for riches and treasures? This weighs with most; for this, none like Christ, he has riches as well as greatness to recommend him to you; *Riches and honour are with me, Prov. viii. 18.* Yea, and his riches are the best sort, his are spiritual riches, *treasures in heaven, Matth. vi. 20.* Riches of life and love, peace and pardon, grace and glory, righteousness and salvation; riches of glory, and riches in glory: And O what poor things are the riches of this world to these? His are true riches, *Luke xvi. 11.* The riches of this world are but painted riches, his are substantial riches. *I will cause them that love me to inherit substance, Prov. viii. 21.* The riches of this world are vain, *they are not, Prov. xxiii. 5.* But the riches of Christ have a reality in them; his are lasting and durable riches; *Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness, Prov. viii. 18.* Worldly riches are perishing and uncertain things, *1 Tim. vi. 17.* Now we enjoy them, but all of a sudden they are gone and disappear; but Christ's are eternal riches for an eternal soul: And as his riches are thus of the best sort, so he has great abundance of them: his riches are boundless and unsearchable: *To me (says Paul) it is given to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, Ephes. iii. 8.* *He is heir of all things, Heb. i. 2.* All the treasures of heaven and earth are his: *He has all fulness dwell-*

ling in him, Col. i. 19. even all the fulness of the Godhead; whole God dwells in him; he has enough to supply all our wants, and to answer all our desires; Do we want grace? *He is full of grace, John i. 14.* Do we want life? *With him is the fountain of life, Psal. xxxvi. 9.* Do we want redemption, redemption from sin, from death, from hell, from wrath? *With him is plenteous redemption, Psal. cxxx. 7.* Do we want peace? He gives peace; *My peace I give unto you, John xiv. 27.* Do we want righteousness? *He has fulfilled all righteousness, he is become the Lord our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6.* Now will you reject this rich Lord? you are poor, and miserable, and naked; and will you not embrace this Christ, tendering himself with all these riches to you? O how justly then will you perish for ever! O that there were some covetous, soul here this day, that would be taken with the riches of Christ!

III. Are you for bounty, for a noble and generous spirit: That's desirable in such a relation, and takes much with many; for this also, none like Christ: He is a bountiful Lord, of a noble and generous spirit, as well as rich: Many a man has riches enough, but has a base, narrow, covetous spirit; and so his wife has little of them; but Christ has a noble generous, bountiful heart: He is not only rich, but he is also willing to lay out all his riches and treasures upon his spouses; all the treasures of his love and grace; all the treasures of his righteousness and consolation; He would have them abundantly filled, abundantly comforted, abundantly enriched for ever: What a generous spirit, towards them does he express, *Cant. v. 1. Eat, O friends; drink yea, drink abundantly, O beloved:* As if he should say, I have enough, infinitely enough for you, and I would have you to have enough, I would have you have your souls full of all good; he would have them to have full graces, full joys, full comforts, and full happiness for ever. *These things speak I unto you, (says he)*

that your joy may be full, John xv. 11. And again, Ask that you may receive, that your joy may be full, John xvi. 24. He wills them like happiness with himself; like love and embraces in the Father's bosom, John xvii. 24, 26. Like grace and holiness, John xvii. 22. O what a noble, generous, bountiful heart has this sweet Lord towards his spouse! Soul, shall it not draw and allure thee to him? Nothing will satisfy him less than their participating with him in his own blessedness: Soul, if thou rejectest this bountiful Lord, know that he has treasures of wrath and vengeance also, which he will plentifully pour out upon thee for ever.

IV. Are you for wisdom and knowledge? Wisdom and knowledge render a person lovely and desirable, 'tis indeed one of a persons highest excellencies and perfections; for this also none like Christ; *He is the Wisdom of God, and the power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. The infinite wisdom of the eternal God does shine forth in him and through him: Yea, *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. Which may be understood actively, as well as passively, he knowing all, as well as having all that is worth knowing in him; *He is the only wise God*, Jude 25. There is no true Wisdom but in him, and there is no true wisdom to be had but by him, and from him; he is often in scripture called *Wisdom*, to note that infinite wisdom that is in him: He knows all persons and all things; he knows the Father, and that as he is known of him, John x. 15. He knows the mind and will of the Father; hence said *to be in his bosom*, which is the place of secrets, as well as love, John i. 18. He knows all his Father's counsels and decrees, which have been of old touching the salvation and damnation of man: Hence we read of *the Lamb's book of life, and names written therein*, Rev. xiii. 8. He knows all the works of God the Father, *the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him whatsoever he doth*, John v. 20. He knows the attributes and perfections of God, and he only, *Matth.*

xi. 27. *John* iv. 56. He knows the whole word of God, being himself *the Word*, *John* i. 1. 'Tis observed by one, that the angels themselves do not know all the word of God, but Christ does: And as he thus knows God, and the things of God, so also he knows man, and the things of man; *He knows all Men and what is in them*, *John* ii. 24, 25. He knows the state, the spirits, the frames, the thoughts, the ends, the counsels, the ways, the wants, the burdens, the temptations of all. In a word, he is infinite in wisdom and counsel, and he knows perfectly, as how to promote his own glory, so how to defend, save, and comfort his spouses, and carry on their happiness in the best way; O, who would not have such an husband! Soul, if thou reject him, know that his wisdom will fight against thee; and he knows how to damn and destroy for ever.

V. Are you for beauty? That takes with most; for this none like Christ; for beauty and comeliness he infinitely surpasses both men and angels. We read of *Moses*, that he was *exceeding fair*; and of *David*, that he was *ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance*; and *Josephus* reports of the one of them, that all that saw him, were amazed at, and enamoured on his beauty. O but what was their beauty to Christ's? Were their beauty, and (with theirs) the beauty of men and angels put together, it would all be nothing to the beauty of Christ; not so much as the light of a farthing candle is to the light of the sun at noon-day; he is *beautiful and glorious*, *Isa.* iv. 2. Was *Moses* fair? Christ is infinitely more fair; *He is fairer than the children of men*, *Psal.* xlv. 2. And had you an eye to behold his beauty, you could not but be amazed at it, and enamoured on it; Was *David* ruddy and of a beautiful countenance? See what the spouse says of Christ, *Cant.* v. 10. *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand*; which notes the perfection of his beauty; and therefore she concludes all with this, (having spoken of the beauty of his several parts) *He is altogether lovely*, ver. 16. or he is

all loveliness; as if he should say, What do I do? There is no end of his beauty and amiableness; there is nothing in him but what is lovely; and there is nothing lovely but what is in him; neither is there any thing in the whole creation, that has beauty and amiableness enough in it, to be a shadow and resemblance of his beauty and amiableness. *O fair sun,* (says Rutherford) *and fair moon, and fair stars, and fair flowers, and fair roses, and fair lilies; but O ten thousand thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas, I have wronged him* (says he) *in making the comparison this way: O black sun and moon! but O fair Lord Jesus! O black flowers, and black lilies and roses! but O fair, fair, even fair Lord Jesus! O black heaven! but O fair Christ! O black angels! but O surpassingly fair Lord Jesus!* In short, divines observe, that there is somewhat in Christ more amiable than salvation; and indeed there are those heart-endearing beauties, those soul-ravishing excellencies in the person of this beloved, that are unspeakably beyond salvation itself; He is the brightness, the lustre, the shining forth of his Father's glory, Heb. i. 2. O, who would not be ravished with, and enamoured on his beauty? A small sight and report thereof, set the daughter's of Jerusalem a seeking after him, Cant. vi. 1. And shall it have no influence upon you, to draw and allure you to him? Does one so fair and beautiful make love to such black and deformed creatures as you and I are, and shall we refuse him? Shall we reject this lovely Lord? O that his beauty might enamour us!

VI. Are you for love as well as loveliness? for a sweet, kind, loving disposition. This is desirable to all; for this also none like Christ; He is of a most sweet, loving, tender, affable disposition; he indeed is love itself, kindness itself, tenderness and compassion itself; *God is love*, 1 John iv. 16. His love to his spouses has all dimensions, *heights, breadths, depths, lengths* in it; yea, it passes knowledge, Ephes. iii. 18, 19. which shew the immensity and unmeasurableness of his love; as if he should say of it, 'tis higher than

heaven, and deeper than the sea; 'tis broader than the orb of the earth, and longer than all time, during throughout eternity; yea, and it passes knowledge. There are two things which exceed our knowledge; our sins, and Christ's love; the one is almost, the other is altogether boundless and bottomless. Tho' a man has never so many accomplishments to commend him, yet if he be of a rough, crabbed, sour disposition, this renders him unacceptable for such a relation; but to all his other perfections, Christ has this added, that he is infinitely loving as well as lovely, and of a most kind, tender disposition to his spouses. Hence we read in scripture of his love, his kindness, his meekness, his gentleness, and the like; all noting the admirable sweetness and amiableness of his disposition; he wept over his very enemies, even them that finally refused him, *Luke xviii. 41, 42*. Yea, he had a kindness for his murderers, and prayed for them, and that whilst they were murdering of him; yea, and his prayer carried many of them to heaven, *Luke xxiii. 34*. O what love, what kindness then must he have for his spouses! He that has love for enemies, and such love, what must he have for his friends? 'Tis a sweet gloss which one of the ancients has upon the place last quoted; *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*: "This (says he) is a word becoming the eternal word, the word of the eternal Father; he prays not only for his persecuters and reproachers, but even for his murderers, improving all his interest in his Father for them; saying in effect, Father, I entreat thee, by that fatherly love thou hast for me, and by which we are one, hear me for these my murderers, in forgiving of them; own the love of thy Son, that thou mayst pardon his enemies." O what kindness does this argue! in a word, his love is as an ocean, which hath neither brim nor bottom; neither can he but be kind to his. *The law, indeed, of kindness* (as 'tis said of the good wife, *Prov. xxi. 26*.) *is in his lips*; yea, and in his heart and carriage too; all being full of love. O that his love might draw you!

Surely no love like his love, none so full, none so free, none so sweet, none so fruitful, none so ravishing, none so lasting; his love, where he loves, never fails, nor can it ever be broken off; *Who shall separate us* (says the apostle) *from the love of Christ?* That is, nothing can separate us from his love, *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any thing else can do it,* Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. And I think, says an holy man, his unchangeable love hath said unto me, I defy thee to break me, or change me. O sirs, experienced souls will tell you, how sweet and good, and rich Christ's love is. They will tell you, one sight, one taste of it makes heaven in the soul, that *'tis better than wine*, Cant. i. 2. And will you reject him and his love too? Will you pour contempt upon so much kindness? O how justly then will you perish under his wrath! He has wrath in him as well as love; wrath for enemies, as well as love for his spouses; and his wrath is as hot and terrible, as his love is sweet and comfortable, yea his love will, if rejected by you, turn into wrath, and no wrath like that, that is the result of abused love: O therefore close with Christ this day.

VII. Are you for a person of esteem, one that is much valued and beloved? An ingenuous soul would desire this; and for this none like Christ; As there is none so kind and loving as he, so there is none so much valued and beloved as he: He is beloved by all whose love is worth the having: He is highly valued and beloved by all the saints, both in heaven and earth; the saints in heaven they admire and adore him; 'tis a part of their happiness to love him, and delight in him for ever: And the saints on earth, they love and value him above all others whatever; he is the dearly beloved of their souls. How oft does the spouse call him her beloved, and her well beloved? And once and again, she declares herself sick of love to him; she is enamour'd on him; he is indeed *the desire of all nations*, Hag. ii. 7. That is to say,

he whom all the faithful in all nations do love, desire, and delight in: Hence also that of the apostle, *To you that believe he is precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7. The saints love and value Christ above all their natural, or creature-enjoyments, above father and mother, husband and wife, ~~and~~ children, houses and lands, and the like: So much is intimated, *Matth. x. 37.* and *xix. 29.* they love and value him above all their spiritual attainments, *Accounting them but dung for Christ*, Phil. iii. 8. They love and value him above their lives, being *ready to die for him*, Acts xxi. 13. Rev. xii. 11. O how dear is Christ to saints? he is also highly valued and beloved by all the holy Angels; he is the great object of their love and admiration: Hence he is said to be *seen of angels*, that is, to be beloved and delighted in by angels, 1 Tim. iii. 16. The blessed angels do see that in Christ, which does enamour them on him, and fill them with love to him, and delight in him; yea, which does fill them with perpetual admirings and adorings of him, Rev. v. 12. Yea, which is more than all this, he is infinitely valued and beloved by God the Father also: The blessed God sees that in Christ, that renders him infinitely amiable and desirable in his eye, and to his soul; both as Son and also as Mediator, he is even infinitely dear and precious to the Father: and as he is the Son of God, the Son of the Father, as the apostle's expression is, so is he the darling and delight of the Father's soul, and was so from all eternity; so much he himself tells us, *Prov. viii. 30.* So is he the infinite and eternal favourite of the infinite and eternal Father; so he is one in essence with the Father, and accordingly must be infinitely dear to the Father. Hence he is said *to be in the Father's bosom*, and as his Son, was so from eternity. *John i. 18.* Now the bosom is the seat of love; and this being in his Father's bosom, notes that strong, ardent, intimate love which the Father has for him: Yea, even as Mediator the Father loves him, *John iii. 35* Yea, he loves him with a choice, a single, and an eminent love, with a love of the highest strain, the

choicest excellency, the sweetest influence; a love that has a stamp of special glory upon it: Hence he is called *the Beloved*, Ephes. i. 6. *He hath made us accepted in the beloved*: that is, in Christ, who is most dear to God: Hence God calls him, *his beloved Son*, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. iii. 17. Yea, he is called the Son of his love; *he hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*; the Greek is, the Son of his love, Col. i. 13. Yea, the Father proclaims him to be the delight of his soul. *Behold* (saith he) *my Servant whom I have chosen; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth*, Isa. xlii. 1. What shall I say? God loves himself infinitely, and next to himself he loves Christ, and delights in him; 'tis true, he loves all the works of his hand as such, especially rational creatures; and among them he has a peculiar love for his saints and the holy angels; but he loves Christ unspeakably more than all: He indeed is first beloved, and most beloved, and best beloved by him, of all others. God, as the school-men observe, does love the very flesh or human nature of Christ, more than all the angels: In a word, he loves him so, as that he is even ravished with him, and he can't but love all that are in him, or related by covenant to him; and that tho' altogether unlovely in themselves. Now first, will you not love and embrace this beloved one, one that is thus valued and beloved by saints by angels, and by God the Father? And let me say, one that is hated and despised by none but devils, and devilish ones; soul, if you reject him, whom all the saints and angels love, admire and adore, then never expect to live with them in the fruition of him, but reckon upon living with devils and damned spirits, in hell for ever: If thou reject him whom the Father loves and delights in, then expect to be rejected both by him and the Father for ever; but soul, rather be prevailed with to love him too.

VIII. Are you for immortality, for one that lives for ever? This added to the rest is desirable; and for thi, none like Christ: Yea, none but Christ, he

and he alone is a never-dying husband; the best husband here below is mortal, and may leave you in a moment; but Christ is immortal, *he is the king immortal, eternal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. *and he only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He, and he only lives for evermore: *Behold I live for evermore*, (says he) Rev. i. 18. He will never leave you in the desolate state of widowhood; yea, not only does he live for ever himself, but moreover he makes all his spouses to live for ever too: So you find, *John xi. 25. 26. I am the resurrection and the life*, (says he) *he that believeth in me, tho' he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die*. O what an husband is this! an husband that lives for ever himself, and that makes his spouses live for ever too; he gives all his spouses such a life as never dies, an immortal life. In a word close with him, and as he will live for ever as thy husband, so thou shalt live for ever as his spouse: O, who would not accept of such a person? Soul, if thou receivest him, know, he lives for ever, to love thee, to comfort thee, to delight thee, to make thee happy in and with himself; but if thou rejectest him, know, that he lives for ever to punish thee, to inflict wrath and vengeance upon thee, and to make thee compleatly miserable; but O, reject him not! Thus have I shewn you a little what an husband Christ is to his spouses; and upon the whole, I would say to you, as the spouse did to the daughters of *Jerusalem, Cant. v. 18. This is my beloved, and this is my friend*; This is he that offers himself to your embraces; surely he is no mean, no despicable person, but one infinitely desirable. Now, what do you say? will you have him, or will you not? Possibly this is the last tender he will ever make of himself to you; possibly the match must be made now or never; therefore now close with him, accept him upon his own terms, who surely is worthy of all acceptation.

C H A P. VIII.

Which shews what great things Christ does for all his Spouses.

TRUE, may some say, Christ's person is desirable, but what will he do for his spouses ? What may our souls expect from him, in case we should close up with him in a marriage-covenant : What will he do ; What will he not do for you ? Surely he acts ~~for~~ himself, and does great things for all his spouses : And O happy, happy they that are indeed espoused unto him ! I shall, for the more effectual drawing of poor souls to him, shew you what he does for his spouses, in these following particulars.

- I. He pays all their debts.
- II. He supplies all their wants.
- III. He heals all their maladies.
- IV. He bears all their burdens.
- V. He sweetens all their afflictions.
- VI. He subdues all their enemies.
- VII. He minds and manages all their concerns.
- VIII. Enjoins them in eternal life and glory.

I. He pays all their debts, fully discharging their souls from all sins and guilt. No sooner is a woman married to her husband, but presently all her debts become his ; he pays all, at least is liable so to do ; in like manner, no sooner is a soul espoused to Christ, but all his debts to law and justice become Christ's, and he pays all ; And O, how great a thing is this ! Friends, we are all in debt, deeply in debt to the law and justice of God ; We owe each one of us more than our ten thousand talents, *Matth. xviii. 24.* We ly under whole mountains of sin and guilt ; the truth is, our first father left us and all his posterity in debt ; we brought sin and guilt into the world with us, and the first day we were born, divine Justice might have arrested us, and have cast us into the dismal prison of utter darkness. " I came of those

“ parents (says one of the ancients) who made me
 “ damned before I was born : they sinners begot me
 “ a sinner in their sin.” And to the same purpose
 another of them speaks, “ No man is free from sin
 “ (says he) in the sight of God ; no, not an infant
 “ of a day old.” And to give you a greater autho-
 rity than these, the holy Apollle asserts the same
 thing, *Rom. v. 12.* *By one man sin entered into the*
world, and death by sin ; and death passed upon all men,
for that all have sinned. Adam sinned, and we all sinned
 in him, we all being in him as in a common head ; and
 the guilt of the act of this sin is as truly ours, as if we
 had each one of us acted it in our own persons ; and we
 all stand justly condemned for it. Hence also *ver. 8.*
 he tells us, *That by the offence of one judgment came*
upon all men to condemnation. Besides we have all
 contracted a vast debt upon ourselves, and do ly un-
 der much actual guilt, and that of a scarlet die and
 crimson tincture. Alas, we have done little but sin-
 ned ever since we came into the world ; and indeed
 as long as we are out of Christ, either all we do is
 sin, or at least we sin in all we do ; we are every day
 running upon new scores, adding sin to sin, and guilt
 to guilt ; And O, how great then must our debt to
 law and Justice needs be ? You look upon that man
 to be deeply in debt indeed, whose debts are so many
 and great, as that he can neither know, nor count
 them. And thus it is with us, so many and so great
 are our sins, and consequently our debts to law and
 justice, that we can neither know, or count them.
David, though an holy man, cries out, *Who can un-*
derstand his errors ? *Psal. xix. 12.* Alas, who of us
 can count the sins of one day ? they pass our know-
 ledge ; and which is worse still, we are under a ne-
 cessity, whilst in our natural state, of increasing our
 sin and guilt every day and hour. Now how shall
 all this debt be paid, this sin and guilt expiated and
 done away ? Why only by Christ, close with him in
 a marriage covenant, and your souls are discharged
 from all. Justice that stands upon satisfaction, it

calls for full payment; its language is, Pay, or perish; pay, or be damned; and nothing have we of our own to pay the least of all our debts, nor can we possibly right God for the wrong we have done him by the least sin; and, which adds to our misery, we are every day in danger of arrest, nor know we how soon justice will, by the hand of that grim serjeant death, clap an arrest upon us, and cast us into prison, whence there is no redemption, until we have paid the utmost farthing, which can never be, *Matth. v. 26*. Now sinner, wouldst thou have thy debts paid, thy sins pardoned, and thy soul freed from the danger of those arrests? then give up thyself to Christ in a marriage covenant: O, this is the only way to discharge all. Christ says to Justice concerning all his spouses, as *Paul* sometimes did to *Philemon* concerning *Onesimus*, *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee any thing, put that upon my account*: So says Christ to God concerning thee immediately upon thy close with him; Father, if this soul hath wronged thee, and oweth thee any thing, place it on my account, I have taken all his debts upon me, I'll be responsible to thee for all: Father, this soul I bled and died for, this soul I was made sin and a curse for, whereby thy justice is fully satisfied: let him therefore be discharged. O soul, how should this draw thee to Christ? Canst thou be content to ly under so great a debt? And is it a small thing for thee to be in danger of so terrible an arrest as that of Justice, which we have spoken of, is? Suppose a man owed ten thousand pounds, and had nothing therewith to pay, and he saw himself in danger every moment of being cast into prison; how sad wouldst thou look upon his case to be? and how gladly, thinkest thou, would he embrace an offer from any to discharge him from all? Soul, thy case is ten thousand times more sad, and how gladly shouldst thou embrace the Lord Jesus, who would, and who alone can discharge all for thee? In short, we read of *Spirits already in prison*, *1 Pet. iii. 13*. Justice has

already clapt its arrest upon thousands and ten thousands, and lodged them in the prison of eternal darkness; and what canst thou expect from it, but to be dealt with in the like manner speedily, unless thou closest with Christ as thy righteousness, to make satisfaction for thee? His righteousness is such as makes a full satisfaction, and is every way answerable to the strictest demands of law and Justice; and by it, he being closed withal by thee, all thy debts are paid at once.

II. He supplies all their wants, and makes blessed provision for them. 'Tis the part of an husband to supply the wants of his wife, and to make provision for her: And this Christ does for all his spouses; *he supplies all their needs according to his riches in glory*: They have wants, and he has fulness; they have needs, and he has riches; and he brings his fulness to their wants, and freely communicates of the one to the other: Truly we are full of wants of all sorts, wants in the soul, and wants in the body. *We are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii.

17. Yea, our wants are such, and so pinching upon us, that with the prodigal we are even *perishing with hunger*, Luke xv. 17. Even the saints themselves are a *poor and needy people*, full of wants, *Isa. xl. 17*. Now how shall these wants be supplied? Only by Christ, and do but close with him, and he will supply all plentifully: Let it be but a day of espousals between Christ and you, and all your wants are supplied for ever. The truth is, Christ is all; he is the great all, (as one calls him) heaven and earth, time and eternity, grace and glory are all in one Christ: He supplies all the spiritual wants of his spouses: Do you want life? *He that hath the Son, hath life*, 1 John v. 12. Do you want grace? Close with Christ and he will give you grace, abundance of grace, John i. 16. Do you want peace, Close with Christ and he will give you peace, *John xiv. 27*. Do you want strength and righteousness, righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification and obe-

dience? Close with Christ, and he will supply you with abundance of both, *Isa. xlv. 24.* Do you want joy and consolation? Close with Christ, he will in due season fill you with joy and consolation, he will comfort your hearts, *1 Thess. ii. 16, 17.* He supplies all the outward wants also of his spouses, and that so as that they want no good thing, *Psal. xxxiv. 10.* They want no outward good thing; but what they want thereof is better for them, than the enjoyment of it would be; True, they may, and often have but a little of outward comforts; but yet then they have much in a little, much love, much blessing, much of Christ and the covenant: And therefore *a little which they have, is said to be better than the riches of many wicked, Psal. xxxvii. 16.* Besides, wherein they are cut short in temporals, Christ often makes it up to them in spirituals: They are *poor in this world, but rich in faith, Jam. ii. 5.* They have not much of the streams, it may be, but they have the more of the fountain; more love, and the sweeter communion with Christ; In a word, whatever heaven or earth affords, so far as they need it. they shall have it: *The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. xi. 5.* O, who could not close with this Christ? Soul, why standest thou off from him? Is there any can supply thy wants but he? Is there any can give thee life, and peace, and pardon, and righteousness, and salvation, but he? Or hadst thou rather die in thy wants than come to this fountain to be supplied? Hadst thou rather perish in thine own poverty, than come to this treasury to be enriched?

III. He heals all their wounds, and cures all their maladies. He is a physician to his spouses, and such a physician, as that though the wound be never so deep, and the disease never so desperate, yet he never fails to work the cure for them. O, how should this allure us to him! we, my beloved, have our wounds, as well as our wants, we are full of maladies and diseases of soul: The truth is, *From the sole of the foot,*

to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in us, Isa. i. 6. The saints themselves have their wounds, yea, wounds many times that *stink, and are corrupt*, (as David speaks. *Psal. xxxviii. 5.* indeed, they are apt to get fresh wounds every day, wounds in their grace, and wounds in their peace; wounds in their comforts, and wounds in their consciences; wounds that smart sorely, and which many times bleed, as if they should bleed to death of them: Well, but Christ heals all their wounds; and do but close with him in a marriage-covenant, and he will heal all thine too whoever thou art: He is that good *Sam-ritan* that has oil and wine, his blood and spirit to pour into the wounds of his people for the healing of them; *By his stripes we are healed, Isa. liii. 5.* His blood and spirit are a sovereign balm, which can heal the deepest wounds and deadliest diseases: His spouses find it so, *He restoreth my soul, says David. Psal. xxiii. 3.* His soul was subject to many ails and infirmities, but Christ restored him under all. Need we say, *Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?* surely there is. Indeed there is none but Christ and his blood that can heal our wounds. O soul, why shouldst thou not close with him, that thou mayest be healed? Do not thy wounds stink? And are they not ready to rankle and gangrene? And unless Christ heals them for thee, must thou not unavoidably die of them and perish for ever? Must thou not suffer cutting off, a cutting off from God, a cutting off from Christ, a cutting off from heaven and all happiness for ever? And wilt thou suffer such a cutting off? Wilt thou be content to die and perish eternally, rather than come to Christ for healing?

IV. He bears all their burdens, we are commanded to bear one anothers burdens; especially husbands should bear the burdens of their wives; And this Christ does, he bears all the burdens of his spouses. Sirs, we all have our burdens which we labour under, burdens within, and burdens without; burdens in the flesh, and burdens in the spirit; burdens that

make us groan under them: *Being burdened, we groan*, says the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 4. *Burdens that are too heavy for us to bear*, as David complained his were, *Psal. xxxviii. 4*. Burdens sometimes that makes us a burden to ourselves, as *Job* complains of himself, *Job vii. 20*. Yea burdens that make our very lives a burden to us; *My soul is weary of my life*, says *Job*, chap. x. 1. Now how shall all these burdens be born? Why Christ will bear them all, he bears all the burdens of his spouses; and if we will close with him in a marriage covenant, there shall not that burden ly upon us, that he will not bear for us. He bears all his peoples burdens two ways.

1. In a way of sympathy and compassion; He weeps with all their tears, and sighs with all their groans: If they are troubled, he grieves; if they are wounded, he bleeds; in all things he bears the other end of the burden; *In all their afflictions he was afflicted*, *Isa. lxiii. 9*. He does, ————, suffer together with us; or (as the apostle renders it) *he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, *Heb. iv. 15*. he is deeply sensible of our burdens, all our sorrows; Such sometimes is the case with the saints, that among men they have none to pity them, and sympathize with them under their burdens, as was *David's* case, *Psal. lxxix. 20*. But even then Christ bears the other end of the burthen, he pities them, and sympathizes with them, and that according to the weight of their burden. And O how sweet is that? "No matter (says an holy man) how heavy the burden be, so long as Christ bears the other end of it."

2. In a way of succour and corroboration; He does not only bear with them, but also gives them strength to bear, and stand up under their burden; *He puts his everlasting arms underneath him*, *Deut. xxxiii. 27*. And with the promise of this he encourages them to cast their burdens upon him; *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*, succour and support thee, *Psal. lv. 22*. He strengthens and succours them, and that answerable to the

weight of their burden; he gives them great strength for great burdens, great succours for great temptations, and so makes good his promise to them, *not to suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear*, 1 Cor. x. 13. The poor souls many times cries out, O, I shall sink under the burden, 'tis too heavy for me to bear; but soul, tho' it be too heavy for thee; yet it is not too heavy for Christ to bear, and he bears with thee, and for thee; yea, he does not only bear, but in due time he bears away all their burdens for them; there is not that burden lies upon any of his spouses, but he so bears it, as at last to bear it utterly away for them, so as they shall never need to groan under it more. He has already born the heaviest burden of all for them, even the guilt and punishment of their sins; *he bare our sins in his body upon the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. And again, *He bare the sin of many*, Isa. liii. 12. And 'tis well for us, that he hath born this burden; for otherwise it must necessarily have sunk and crush'd us forever; we could never have stood under it; and as he has born this, so he bears, and in due time will bear away all for them. Are their sins, the iniquities of their holy things, a burden to them? These he bears away from them, *Exod. xxviii. 38*. Are the remainders of original corruption a burden to them? These make them groan indeed; these in due time he bears away from them, *Rom vii. 24, 25*. Are their conflicts and temptations a burden to them? These ly heavy upon some, in due time he bears these away also; he turns their conflicts into triumphs; O, how should this comfort the hearts of saints? And, how should it draw and allure sinners to him? O sirs, will you sink under your burdens, rather than have Christ to bear them for you? O, be not so cruel to your own souls!

V. He sweetens all their afflictions for them; afflictions they may, and often do meet withal, many and great afflictions. Christ tells us, *That in the world we shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. But

he sweetens all for them; he turns their wormwood into wine, and therefore at the same time, with the same breath, he says, *In me ye shall have peace*: As if he should say, I will sweeten all your tribulations to you. Christ sweetens his peoples afflictions to them two ways:

1. By his presence with them, and the communications of his love to them under their afflictions; Christ has promised to be with his people, and to minister comforts to them in their afflictions; *Isa. xliii. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I'll be with thee; and through the fire it shall not burn thee*; that is, I'll be with thee in all the sharpest afflictions thou meetest withal; they meet with many afflictions, sickness, poverty, reproach, persecution, and the like, but Christ is with them in all, and shews them his love, and this sweetens all to them, the truth is, Christ is never more with his people, and he usually never communicates more of his love and consolations to them, than when in affliction; Then usually 'tis that they have the sweetest embraces of his bosom, then they have the clearest sights, the fullest tastes, the choicest and most eminent sealings of his love to them: *Then he leads them unto his banqueting house, and displays the banner of his love over them: He stays them with flaggons, and comforts them with apples; his left hand is under their head, and his right hand doth embrace them, Cant. ii. 4, 5, 6.* Then he ministers his strongest consolations to them, *comforting them in all their tribulations, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5.* The truth is, their sharpest afflictions are but to prepare them for his sweetest consolations; and indeed he therefore often times afflicts them, that he may manifest his love, and minister consolations to them; according to that of *Hosea ii. 14. I will allure her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her*; and indeed, as strong consolations often times prepare for great afflictions; so great afflictions usually make way for strong consolations. " Afflictions " (says a worthy divine) is the air in which Christ's

"love especially breaths; and Christ and the cross
"are sweet company." This, *viz.* Christ's love and
presence with his people in their affliction, is what
Turns their night into day, their darkness into light,
their pains into ease, their sorrows into joy, their
losses into gain; yea, and death itself into life. *Ths'*
I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, yet
will I fear no evil, because thou art with me, Psal.
xxiii. 4. It turns a prison into a pleasant palace, yea,
it turns a fiery furnace into a delightful walk, as in
the case of the three children, and this experienced
souls find; O, how sweet are afflictions when Christ
and his love come with them!

2. By sanctifying their afflictions to them, and
working good to their souls out of all. Sanctified af-
flictions are sweet afflictions: they meet with afflic-
tions, but Christ gives them the sweet fruit, and a
blessed issue of them; makes them all work together
for good to them, according to that great oracle,
Rom. viii. 23. All things shall work together for good to
them that love God. By these he proves their graces,
and improves their experiences; he makes them all to
be, as the *Gibeonites* sometime were to the congrega-
tion of God, as so many hewers of wood, and draw-
ers of water to their faith, to their comforts, to their
holiness on earth, and happiness in heaven. The
faith of this sweetened all *Job's* great and heavy af-
flictions to him: *When I am tried* (says he) *I shall*
come forth as gold, Job xxiii. 10. Hereby he tries their
faith, which is better than gold, 1 Pet. i. 7. Hereby
he refines them, and purges away their dross from
them; *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with sil-*
ver: I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction:
or, as you may read it, I have made a choice of one
of thee in the furnace of affliction, *Isa. xlvi. 10.*
Hereby he makes them partakers of his holiness, Heb.
xii. 10. *By this he purgeth away their iniquity, and*
taketh away their sin, 11a. xxvii. 9. In short hereby
he humbles them, and seals instruction to them:
Hereby he weans them from the world, draws them

nearer to himself, quickens their hearts in his good ways, and raises them up to higher strains of grace, and pitches in holiness, than they were got up to before: Yea, hereby he encreases their revenue of glory, and adds to their crown in eternity. *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment,* (says the apostle) *work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. Thus he sanctifies all; and O, how doth this sweeten all! Here is a cross 'tis true, may the soul say, but by this cross does Christ crucify me to sin and the world, he weans me from the creature, sets me a longing after heaven; and so long welcome cross, how heavy soever. Here's an affliction, 'tis true, and 'tis an heavy one; but by Christ proves and brightens by graces, and that sweetens all. "O, what owe I (says *Rutherford*) "to the file and hammer of my sweet Lord Jesus?" "He hath taught me more (says he) by my six months "imprisonment, than ever I learnt in my nine years "past ministry." *Luther* was wont to say, "Three "things made a good minister; temptation, affliction, supplication." The same also conduce much to the making of a good Christian: And indeed 'tis seldom that ever a soul comes to any eminency in grace, until he has been exercised with sanctified afflictions and temptations. And doubtless there is many a soul who may and must say, That next to Christ, his afflictions have, through his grace and blessing, been his best mercies. O how should this draw souls to Christ, and allure them into a marriage-covenant with him! Poor soul, it may be that which keeps thee from Christ is the fear of what afflictions thou mayest meet with in his ways. But know (1) thou mayest meet with affliction, first or last, tho' thou never closest with Christ; for wicked men, and unbelievers meet with troubles and afflictions, and that even in this world oft-times: However, to be sure at last they will have a full cup, yea, the very dregs of God's wrath poured out onto them: They will meet with and fall under sorer and more dread-

ful afflictions, than any thou canst meet withal in the way, and for the sake of Christ; for pray consider, is there any trouble, any affliction thou canst meet withal for Christ, like to this, for a man to die in his sins, to be separated from God for ever, to have infiniteness and eternity combined against thee? Is there any trouble or afflictions like the torments of the infernal pit, and being the object of infinite wrath for ever? And yet this will be the lot at last of all that close not with Christ in marriage relation. (2.) What ever afflictions thou mayest meet withal in the way of Christ, closing with him, he sweetens all for thee; and that so as that thou wouldest not have been without them for a world? O, fear not at the cross, but close in with Christ.

VI. 'Tis he subdues all their enemies for them: True, the poor saints and spouses of Christ are beset with enemies on all hands; they have many enemies, and mighty enemies; enemies within and enemies without, and all in confederacy against them to destroy them, to destroy their lives, to destroy their graces, to destroy their peace and comforts, to destroy their souls and happiness for ever; all like so many roaring lions seeking to devour them: Well, but Christ, who is their captain as well as their husband, subdues and conquers all for them; and, first or last, makes them to set their feet upon their necks, and triumph over them: He makes them *conquerors*, *yea more than conquerors* over all, *Rom. viii. 37.* He makes them so to conquer them, as sooner or later to gain by all their conflicts and oppositions: Indeed, Christ has already conquered all his people's enemies for them. The saints have five great enemies, *sin, self, the world, the devil, and death*: and Christ has long since conquered them all for them, and by degrees brings them into the joyful triumph of that conquest.

I. He has conquered sin for them: He, by being made sin, hath obtained an eternal victory over sin for all his people: sin is the saints great enemy; 'tis that

which wars against their souls, Rom. vii. 23. 1 Pet. ii. 11. And indeed this is that which gives all the rest an advantage against them; but even this greatest enemy, Christ has conquered for them: Hence he is said to have condemned sin in the flesh; he for sin condemned sin in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. i. e. He, by being made a sacrifice for sin, hath killed and subdued sin, past a sentence of death and condemnation upon sin for ever: Hence also our old man is said to be crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, Rom. vi. 6. Hence also he is said to destroy sin, to take away sin, and the like: And how? Why, as to the reign and power, as well as the guilt and curse of it: And this Paul acted by the spirit of faith, could triumph in, even whilst he was in the sharpest conflicts with sin, Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. *I thank God through Christ*, (says he) For what? Why, for victory over, and deliverance from the law of sin he was now conflicting with.

2. He has conquered self for them: Self as well as sin, is our deadly enemy: This indeed is a near close enemy, and most difficult to be slain; this is an enemy that we are too too loth many times to have destroyed, and yet an enemy which makes woful spoil upon us and our happiness. I often think of the speech of a holy and learned divine; "O says he, if I could be master of that house idol myself, my own, my own will, wit, credit and ease, how blessed were I! O but we have need, says he, to be redeemed from ourselves, rather than from the devil and the world! And presently again he cries out, O, wretched idol myself! When shall I see thee wholly decourted, and Christ wholly put in thy room!" And who that have any acquaintance with themselves, do not find cause to cry out in like manner, O, this self, this wretched self, how great an enemy is it! Well, but this Christ hath conquered; and closing with him, thou shalt by degrees find it to die and fall under thee. Paul did so, *I am cruci-*

cified with Christ, says he, nevertheless I live; yet not I, Gal. ii. 20. He had an I, a self which ruled in him; but by Christ 'twas crucified and slain for him, and he was a conqueror over it.

3. He has conquered the world for them; take the world in what notion you will, and 'tis in one respect or other an enemy to the saints; the men of the world, the things of the world, the frowns of the world, the flatteries of the world, they all, one way or other, fight against them, and are enemies to them. The world as well as sin and self, is a mortal enemy to them: But this enemy also, Christ has subdued and conquered for them; he has told them so much for their comfort, under the oppositions they meet with from it, *John xvi. 23. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,* (says he) *q. d.* the world is your enemy, but 'tis a conquer'd enemy; 'twill molest and oppose you, but it shall not be able to hurt you, for I have conquered it for you. And as he has conquered it for us, so he will enable us, closing with him by faith, to conquer it; so *1 John v. 4. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith:* The world shall not always annoy and infect the saints.

4. He has conquered the devil, yea, all the devils in hell for them: The devil is the enemy of the saints, and indeed he is a formidable one; an adversary that goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, *1 Pet. v. 8.* He is a subtil, a potent, a malicious, a cruel and an indefatigable enemy: But so formidable an enemy as he is, Christ hath conquered him for them; hence he is said to have destroyed the devil; he partook of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, *Heb. ii. 14.* and to have spoiled principalities and powers, and to have made a shew of them openly on his cross, triumphing over them, *Col. ii. 15* dragging them at his chariot-wheels; as was the manner sometimes for conquerors to deal by their vanquished enemies: The sum is, that he hath

made a complete and glorious conquest over all the devils in hell for believers; he has conquered them even to triumph: Christ has conquered the devil for his spouses, as to his ruling, reigning, and commanding power, and he will, and does conquer him at last, yea, speedily, as to his tempting, vexing, and seducing power; *The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly*; Rom. xvi. 20. Shortly, soul, the devil shall vex thee no more, molest thee no more, infest and annoy thee by his temptations no more.

5. He has conquered death for them: Death is an enemy, and 'tis the *last enemy that is to be destroyed*; so the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 26, and in itself considered, a terrible enemy, it is *the king of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. But this enemy hath Christ conquered for all his; he has taken away all its killing power, its sting and curse in so much that they may holily triumph over it, and rejoice in its approach. The apostle did so, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *Death* (says he) *is swallowed up in victory*; *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* O what a triumph does he here act over death through the conquest Christ has gotten over it for him? Truly this enemy is so far conquered by him for them, that 'tis become indeed a friend to them; and they can when in a right spirit, embrace it as such, and long for it as such. Christ by death has unstung death, and in a sort underneath it: Thus Christ hath conquered all his peoples enemies, and they being made one with him in a marriage-covenant, all his victories are theirs; and his conquest theirs, and they are conquerors over all in him; and O how sweet, how encouraging is this! and how should it win souls to close with him! Poor soul, thou feelest thyself invironed with enemies, thou art hard beset on all hands; legions of lusts and devils attend with self; death, and the world oppose

themselves against thee; and thou art often crying out, as *David* in another case, *2 Sam. iii. 19.* *I am weak, and these men, the Sons of Zerviah, are too strong for me;* yea, thou art ready to say of them, as he sometimes in his unbelief did of *Saul*, *1 Sam. xxvii. 1.* *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;* Alas, I am a weak nothing-creature, and am unable to grapple with the least of all mine enemies; and how then shall I stand up against them all? Surely I shall perish by them at last. Well soul, but know for thy encouragement, that all thine enemies are conquer'd by Christ, and though they are too strong for thee, yet they are not too strong for Christ to grapple with, and make thee a conqueror over. When the prophet's servants saw what a great and formidable Host compassed the city, he cried out, *Alas master, what shall we do?* And what did his master answer him? *Fear not.* (said he) *for they that be with us, be more than they that be with them,* *2 Kings vi. 15, 16.* So, poor soul, when thou considerest what great and formidable enemies do compass thee about, thou criest out to one and another; Alas, sir, what shall I do? But I would say to thee as the prophet to his servant; fear not, there is more with thee than with them; thou hast Christ with thee, to fight and overcome all for thee; therefore cheer up, give up thyself unto him; and the victory over *sin, self, world, death, devil,* and all is thine for ever. O, who would not have such an husband?

VII. He minds and manages all their concerns for them. 'Tis the part of an husband to mind and manage the concerns of his wife, and to have a natural care both of her and them; and thus 'tis with Christ. He manages all his people's concerns, and that in heaven, on earth, and in their own souls.

1. He minds and manages all their concerns in heaven for them; their affairs by much in heaven, their business there is great; and Christ their husband minds all, and transacts all for them, and that faithfully; indeed he went thither on purpose to transact

their affairs for them; hence he is said to have entered, not into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for them, Heb. ix. 24. Hence also he is said to be an advocate with the Father for them, 1 John ii. 1. He pleads with the Father for them; have they a petition to present to the Father for this or the other mercy? He presents and prefers it for them; He takes all their prayers, and sprinkles them with his own blood, perfumes them with the odours of his own incense, and then tenders them to the Father with his own hand, Rev. viii. 1. We pray very brokenly, but he mends our prayers, yea, oftentimes when we can't pray, when we can't speak for ourselves, he speaks for us, and prefers our petitions for us: Are there charges and accusations brought in against them, either by Satan the accuser of the brethren on the one hand, or by the law and justice of God, which are daily wronged and violated on the other hand? why, Christ interposes for them, he answers all, and invalidates all, *he rebukes Satan*, Zech. iii. 2. In the first place, we find *Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist (or accuse) him*; and verse 2. we have Christ sharply rebuking Satan for this accusation; *The Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee*; And as he rebukes Satan, so he satisfies the law and justice of his Father; hence he is said to *make intercession for them*, and that to the overthrowing of all those counter-pleas which law or justice can put against them, Rom. viii. 33. 34. Have they sinned, and do they need a new pardon, need to have things set right and even between God and them afresh? This also Christ does for them; *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 1, 2. While they through weakness and temptation are sinning on earth, he out of his grace and love is pleading with the Father for them in hea-

ven: Thus he minds all their concerns in heaven for them.

2. He minds and manages all their concerns on earth for them; the saints have their affairs and concerns on earth among men, as well as in heaven with the Father; and Christ their husband minds and transacts all these likewise for them. Indeed, he is ever mindful of them, and at work for them, viz. to do them good, and to promote their interest; hence, says he, *the Father worketh hitherto, and I work*, John v. 17. I am always at work for your good. Are they wronged and oppressed by enemies? He avenges all their wrongs; hence he is said to *reprove kings for their sakes*, Psal. cv. 14 and elsewhere, to plead their cause against their enemies, and the like. Do they need deliverance and salvation out of troubles and distresses? *He brings salvation to them*, Isa. lxiii. 9. Do they need conduct and guidance thro' their difficulties and temptations in the wilderness of the world? He leads and guides them; *He leads Joseph like a flock*, Psal. lxxx. 1. And elsewhere, *I will guide thee with mine eye*: He carries them through all their straits, and all their difficulties; and even when he seems most to forget them, even then he is ever mindful of them, and of their concerns: *For he hath graven them upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him*; and though they often say, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me*; yet he never forsakes or forgets them, nor can he; *No, a woman may sooner forget her sucking child, and not have compassion upon the son of her womb, than he can forget his people*, Isa. xlix. 14, 15, 16.

3. He minds and manages all their concerns for them in their own souls: The saints have many and great concerns to be minded within them, concerns of great moment and importance; and, were they to be minded and managed only by themselves, they would make but poor work: O! but Christ their husband, minds and manages all these likewise for them; and to be sure they can't miscarry in his hand;

He gives them his spirit to work all their works in them, and for them: He observes what grace, what strength, what counsel, what comfort they stand in need of, and by his spirit ministers all to them: Hence he is said *to give them grace and mercy to help in time of need, seasonable supplies*, Heb. iv. 16. and to be both *the author and finisher of their faith*, Heb. xii. 2. He minds and observes how the great work goes on in their souls, and he takes care for the prospering and perfecting of it: O, how should this draw us to Christ, and encourage us to accept of the offers of his love?

VIII. He enjoiners them in eternal life and glory. Husbands use to make jointers to their wives, they entitle them to such or such lands and inheritances: So Christ enjoiners all his spouses, in no less than eternal life and blessedness: he makes over a great jointer to them; glory, a weight of glory, *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *An inheritance in light*, Col. i. 12. *An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. A kingdom, an everlasting kingdom; *an everlasting kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world*, Matth. xxv. 34. *A crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. *A crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. *A crown of glory which never fadeth, never withers*, 1 Pet. v. 4. The truth is, he endows them with all his riches, treasures, dignities, with all the privileges of his house, with all the purchase of his blood, with all the blessings of his love, with all the treasures of heaven, with all the glories of eternity: Look, whatever is in the promise, whatever is in the covenant; whatever is in the glorious counsel of election: Look, whatever the presence of God, the face of God, the bosom of God can afford: Look, whatever the heart of God could give, the wisdom of God contrive, the power of God produce, or the blood of God purchase, that, all that does Christ enjoiner his people in. O Sirs, how should this draw and allure us to Christ? Is heaven and eternal life worth nothing? Are all the glories of

eternity of no value? O, who are you, that Christ should be willing to instate you into all this? In yourselves you are lying in the lap and bosom of hell, heirs of wrath and condemnation, in danger every moment of sinking into the infernal pit: But lo! Christ comes and makes love to you; and if you accept of him, he will entitle you unto life and blessedness, to such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Take him therefore, I beseech you, in your most intimate embraces, thus you see, in part, what great things Christ does for his spouses: Now will you accept of him; or will you not? May I not say to you, as *Saul* sometimes did to his servants, *Hear now; will the son of Jesse give to every one of you fields, and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands?* 1 Sam. xxii. 7. So will *sin* or the *world* or the *law*, to which you are naturally wedded, do such great things for you as Christ will? Will these pay your debts for you, supply your wants for you, heal your wounds for you, and the like? Will these secure your eternal interest for you, and make you happy in the other world, as Christ would? Alas! they can do none of all this: O close, close therefore with Christ who can and will do all.

C H A P. IX.

Which opens a little the heart of Christ, and shows how much he is set upon an espousal with sinners.

SURELY Christ is the best husband; and none can do such great things as he for his spouses, which renders an espousal to him very desirable: But will he take such as we are into to near a relation with him? Has he any mind, any heart to the business? Any mind, any heart; his heart is set upon nothing more, than an espousal with sinners coming to him, and his soul longs after them: Never did the more passionate lover, more long for an espousal between him and his beloved, that Christ does for an espousal.

sal between himself and sinners. And because love is the loadstone of love, and the most powerful attractive in order to the more effectual drawing and alluring your souls to Christ, I shall a little, in a few particulars, open my sweet Lord's heart to you in this business: And O, that the reports of his love to you, and his willingness to espouse to himself, might draw your hearts out a little in love to him, and work you into a willingness to be espoused.

I. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an espousal with sinners, that he willingly became incarnate, bled, and died in order hereunto; and O, how should this draw us to him? Should you see a man do some great act of self-denial and abasement, and withal freely venture his life in order to his obtaining such or such a one to his wife, you would easily conclude, that his heart was much set upon an espousal with her: Lo then! Christ has greatly denied and abased himself, he became incarnate, and not only freely ventured, but laid down his life in order to an espousal between himself and sinners; and how much then must his heart be in the business?

I. He became incarnate in order hereunto. Had not Christ been incarnate, we could never possibly have been espoused unto him, nor have enjoyed conjugal communion with him; but that we might be capable of, and arrive unto such an happiness, he who in himself was the eternal Son, freely became incarnate, assumed human nature into union with his divine person; hence 'tis said, *the word was made flesh*, John i. 14. not that there was a transmutation of God into flesh; but the word of God, that is, God the son, the second person in trinity, assumed flesh, human nature into union with himself; and so near is that union into which the human nature is assumed with the person of the Son of God, as that, that nature hath no subsistence but what it has in his divine person; and for that end among others (as a learned divine hath observed) 'tis so express'd;

“ The word was made flesh ; namely, to note the
 “ infinite nearness of that union which our nature is
 “ taken into with the divine person ; it being so near,
 “ as that it hath no substance of its own, but is, as
 “ it were, wholly melted into the personality of the
 “ Son of God.” Hence also he is said to *partake of*
flesh and blood ; to be manifested in the flesh, and the
 like : And O, what an act of self denial and abase-
 ment was this ! and how great was Christ’s conde-
 scension herein ! In *Phil. ii. 6, 7.* the apostle speaks
 of it as the greatest abasement he could stoop unto :
Who (says he, speaking of Christ) being in the form of
of God, thought it no 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
man. Pray mark, he was in the form of God ; that
 is, he was truly and really God, as the Father was ;
 and he thought it no robbery to be equal with God,
i. e. he had all those divine excellencies and perfecti-
 ons in him, which the Father had in him ; and yet
 (says he) he took upon him the form of a servant,
 and was made in the likeness of men ; that is, he be-
 came incarnate, he became man. Well, and what
 does this argue ? Even infinite condescension ; there-
 fore he tells us, that herein he became of no reputa-
 tion ; or as the Greek is, he emptied himself, to wit,
 of his glory, his glory was veiled and clouded here-
 by ; the glory of his Godhead was eclipsed ; ’tis true
 indeed, his Godhead was not hereby lost, or laid a-
 side ; no, he was as much and truly God after his
 incarnation, as he was before. He did not cease to
 be God by becoming man. But (as one of the an-
 cients expresses it) “ he was made that which he was
 not, and yet remained that which he was.” He was
 made man, yet so as that he still remained to be
 God ; but tho’ his Godhead was not lost, or laid
 aside hereby, yet hereby was the glory of it veiled
 and lost for a time, and he was content to have it so :
 O, how great a condescension was this ? O ! for him
 that was God, God equal with the Father to become

man, to cover himself with the coarse veil of our flesh, and be content for so long a time to lose the glory of this Deity, which was infinitely dear to him; and all this to make way for an espousal between himself and poor sinners: What self-abasement was this? and how should it encourage souls to look after an espousal to him!

2. He not only became incarnate, but also freely bled, and died, in order hereunto; which is a further discovery of his heart herein, *Being (says the Apostle) found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, i. e. to the most formidable death, a death of pain, a death of shame, an accursed death, *Phil. ii. 8.* Hence also 'tis said, that *he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us*, *Ephes. v. 2.* Yea, not only did he bleed, and suffer, and die, but he did all freely, and with much readiness and enlargedness of soul; hence he is said to have *poured out his soul unto death*, *Isa. liii. 11.* He seemed in an holy manner prodigal of his life in the case; he thought neither blood, nor life, nor any thing too much for them. O, how much does this argue his heart to be upon the business: It spake *Jacob's* heart to be much set upon *Rachel* to have her to wife, that he could be content to undergo so much hard service for her, as he did, even seven years service. *Jacob* (tis said) *served seven years for Rachel, yea, and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her*, *Gen. xxix. 10.* So sure it argues *Christ's* heart to be much set upon an espousal with sinners, that he was content not only to serve, but even bleed, and die for them, in order hereunto. O sirs, behold, and wonder, *Christ* comes from heaven, quits his throne, leaves the bosom of his Father, which he had, with infinite delight, lain from eternity! Behold and wonder, the Lord of life dies, the God of blessing was made a curse. The infinitely beloved Son treads the wine-press of the Father's wrath, heaven descends unto hell, glory veils and eclipses itself under shame

and ignominy, the infinite Holy One is made sin; and all this to redeem, and redeeming espoused poor sinners to himself! And is not his heart upon the business, think you? And has he not love for them? O, be not faithless, but believe.

II. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an espousal with sinners, that he condescends sweetly to woo for them, and solicites them for their love and acceptance of him. Should you see a man with all earnestness and importunity, wooing a virgin and making love to her, following her from day to day with renewed offers and solicitations, you would conclude his heart was much set upon an espousal with her. And is it not thus with the Lord Jesus toward poor sinners? Does he not woo them, and make love to them, and that with all earnestness and pressing importunity, following them with renewed offers and solicitations from day to day? Now he meets them in this ordinance, and there he woos them, and makes love to them; anon he meets them in that ordinance, and there woos them, and makes love to them: Now he sends his ministers, and by them woos them, and makes love to them, anon he sends his spirit, and by him woos them, and makes love to them; thus he is every way, and upon all occasions, wooing them. And in his wooing of them.

How earnestly does he call, and invite them to himself? 'tis not a cold offer, or a slight motion only that he makes to them, but he moves, and offers, calls, and invites with all earnestness and importunity, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, come ye, yea, come, Isa. lv. 1.* And again, *The spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that is athirst, come, Rev. xxii. 17.*

How vigourously does he plead and expostulate the business with them? Christ does not only call, and invite, but he also pleads, and expostulates with sinners in the case, and that in the most winning way, and with the most weighty arguments that possibly may be, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come*

unto the waters. Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. And again, Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die O house of Israel? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. I have no pleasure in your damnation, but had rather that you would come unto me, and live. Why will you die? Is not life better than death? Is not heaven better than hell? Is not my love better than lust? Are not the pleasures of my presence, and at my right hand, which are for evermore, better than the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, a short season? Why will you die? Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Am I not able to save you to the uttermost? and are not my arms wide open to receive you? Have not I died for that very end, that you might live? Look, here's my blood, here are my wounds; behold me in the garden, and see me bleeding there for you: Behold me upon the cross and see me bleeding, yea, bleeding to death there for you; and then see if you can find in your heart to refuse me any longer? In short, would you not lose all your cost and all your labour? Would you enjoy good, the best good, the most satisfying good? Have you any mind to life, and would you have your souls live for ever? Have you any mind to my covenant, and all the riches and treasures of that? then accept of me and my love, in whom you shall have all.

How sweetly doth he melt, and how tenderly do his bowels yearn towards them, and over them? He comes to them, not only with invitations in his lips, but also with tears in his eyes, and tender compassion in his heart, strongly working towards them: Now he weeps, and then he groans; now he drops a sigh, and then a tear; and all to melt their hard and unbelieving hearts, to draw and allure them to himself. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (says he) hear

often would I have gathered thee? *Matth. xxiii. 37.* The repetition of the name, shews the depth of his love and commiseration towards them. And indeed methinks I see how the tender heart of my dear Lord melt, and even bleeds over this unbelieving city, and in them all unbelieving sinners to whom he offers himself; he is melted into tears towards them: So you have it, *Luke xix. 41, 42.* in *Matthew* he groans only, but in *Luke* he both weeps and groans. Lo then! here is sweet Jesus weeping and groaning; here's the joy of the whole earth weeping and groaning, and that over *Jerusalem*, a bloody city, a city embroiled in the blood of his saints, and a city thirsty of his own blood, a city full of wickedness, full of the contempt of his gospel, his grace, his salvation.

How freely and openly does he reveal and offer himself then? The offer Christ makes, is not a limited offer; but general and extensive to all; nor is it an offer made upon hard and severe terms, but upon terms of grace and love; *Look unto me, and be saved all ye ends of the earth, Isa. xlv. 22.* *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price, Isa. lv. 1.* *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Matth. xi. 28.* *Whoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink, John vii. 37.* *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, Rev. iii. 20.* And again, *Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely, Rev. xxii. 17.* Mark all, every one, whoever will, though never so vile and sinful, never so black and deformed, though he has been never so desperate an enemy to me and my glory. surely, were not his heart much in the business, he would not thus freely, and unlimitedly offer himself.

How affectionately does he beseech and intreat them? The tender trembling child cannot more affectionately intreat and beseech his offended Father

to spare him, and be reconciled unto him, than Christ does intreat and beseech offending sinners to be espoused to him, and be made happy by him for ever. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,* (says the apostle) *as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,* 2 Cor. v. 20. Pray mark, here is praying and beseeching; the Lord of glory, as it were, upon his knees to poor sinners, begging them to accept of him and his love: *We pray you in Christ's stead: i. e.* 'tis not we but Christ by us, that prays and beseeches you: O what condescension is this! Once more;

How sweetly does he draw and allure them? *Draw me* (says the spouse) *and we will run after thee,* Cant. i. 4. And indeed he does draw and allure souls, and that with admirable sweetness; *I drew them with cords of love, with the bands of affection,* (says he) *Hos.* xi. 4. Now he sets his beauty, riches, and glory before them, thereby to draw and allure them; anon he drops a little myrrh upon the handle of the lock: he gives them some little taste and feeling of his grace and love, thereby to draw and allure them: Now he sweetly insinuates his love to them: he tells them, how much his heart is upon them, what great things he has done and suffered for them; and how that he has no design upon them, but to make them happy for ever: Anon he lets them see, how infinitely happy a marriage-union and communion with him would make them; he lets in some small glimpses of heaven and glory upon them; he opens the treasures of his covenant and kingdom to them: and all this to draw and allure them to himself. And over and above all this, he ever and anon comes, and as it were, takes the soul aside, and by the still voice of his spirit, makes love to him: Come, poor soul, says he, look upon thy bleeding, dying Saviour; come, see what I have done, and what I have prepared for thee, see what treasures of life and love, of grace and glory there are in me: Look, here is my love, taste and see if it be not better than wine:

here is my bosom, make thy bed in it, and see if it be not a warm bosom. Come soul, tho' thou hast no love for me, yet I have love for thee, and would fain have thee happy for ever. Why therefore shouldst thou stand at such a distance from me? Thus he sweetly wooes and sollicitates them for their love and acceptance of him. Now soul, does he thus woo thee, and wilt thou refuse him? If so, know that the time of love will not always last; yea, and the time will come, when though thou callest and criest, yet he will not hear: Let me therefore say to thee, as Paul to his Corinthians, *Receive not the grace of God in vain: for behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

III. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an espousal with sinners, that he not only thus wooes them, but also waits long upon them, often renews the offer of his love to them, and puts up many horrid affronts and provocations at their hands, if at last he may prevail with them. Suppose a man should not only make love to a person, but he should also wait long upon her in the tenders of his love; and that though he meet with many affronts and unkindnesses from her, this you would say, would argue his heart to be much set upon her: And is it not thus with Christ towards poor sinners? O, how long does he wait upon them? How often does he renew the offers of his love to them? And what affronts, indignities, and unkindnesses does he bear with at their hands? *Behold I stand at the door and knock,* says he, Rev. iii. 10. Standing, is a waiting posture; Christ does not give a call or a knock at the door of the sinners heart, and away; no, he stands knocking, he gives call after call, and knock after knock, being ever ready to enter, if the soul will at all open to him. No again, *All the day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people; a people that provoke me to anger continually to my face* Isa. lxv. 2. 3. Rom. x. 21. *All the day long,* Christ waits day after day, and week after week, and month after month,

and year after year upon sinners, yea, and many affronts and indignities does he put up, and pass by for them! *All the day long have I stretched forth my hands*, opened the arms and bosom of my love, and that *to a gainsaying and rebellious people*, an opposing, refusing, resisting people, a *people that provoked me to my face continually every day*; a people that are daily loading me with their sins and provocations; a people that will not let me go one day without affronting me, and that to my face; a people that are every day daring me to damn them; O, what patience is this? So *Matth. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldest not?* How often? not once, or twice, or ten times, but very often; it notes that he waited long upon them, and strove long with them, and that after many and often repeated affronts and refusals on their part, he still tendered himself and his love to them; and thus he deals by sinners still, he tenders himself and his love to them, but they will have none of him; he renews his offers, and they renew their refusals; they spurn at his love, yet he makes love still; he tells them what great preparations he has made, and how all things are ready, and how welcome they shall be to the marriage feast; but *they make light of all*, preferring a worldly interest before him and it, *Matth. xxii. 1.* Well, however he leaves them not, but sends again, and calls again, notwithstanding all. They do in effect tell him, they desire neither him nor his grace, that they had rather enjoy their lusts, than his love; they abuse his grace, they despise his corrections, they slight his calls, they resist his spirit; O what affronts are these? And after all this, it may be, he renews his suit, laying himself and his love at their feet, if yet he may win them to him. O how much must his heart be upon an espousal with them! soul let it melt thee into love to him. O, who would withstand such a lord, such a lover! What? woo, and wait so long too, put up

such, and so many affronts, and still make love? Was ever love like this, and patience like this?

IV. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an espousal with sinners, as that he has laid himself under bonds to receive them, and accept of them in case they are willing to be espoused to him: and what greater discovery of his heart than this? Should a young man lay himself under bonds to marry such or such a woman, tho' as yet she hated him, and were utterly averse from him; you would surely conclude that his heart was much set upon a match with her: and truly, this is no more than Christ the Lord of glory hath done; he is become bound to marry poor sinners to himself, yea, tho' at present they hate him, and are altogether averse from him; yet in case they shall at last be willing to close with him, he is become bound to receive them. He is become bound, both to the Father, and to them.

1. He is bound to the Father to receive sinners, and espouse them to himself, in case they come to him: So much is held forth in *John. vi. 27. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall [mark] give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed;* that is, God the Father hath ordained and appointed Christ; he has laid a law upon him to give eternal life, and therefore himself to sinners coming to him; and we may therefore rest assured that he will do it: yea, Christ looks upon himself as under a law from the Father to do it, and therefore says, *Thy law is within my heart, Psal. xl. 8. Thy law:* What law? Why, the law of his mediatorsnip, which commands him, as to die for sinners, so to accept of sinners, when they come unto him; and surely he that so freely fulfilled it in the one, will not be disobedient to it in the other. In a word, in that covenant (by divines called the covenant of redemption) which past between the Father and Jesus Christ from eternity, concerning the salvation of sinners,

Christ became bound to the Father to receive all that should come to him, and he will be faithful.

2. He is bound to sinners themselves in the case: He has indeed given them his bond; he has given them his promise; which is his bond, and a strong one too, an invincible obligation, and the soul may look on it as such; but where is his promise? Truly the whole gospel is but as it were one general promise made by him to this purpose; but take one for all the rest, John vi. 36. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no ways cast out, i. e. I will most assuredly receive him, and bestow myself and eternal life upon him.* And how often has he renewed this bond of his! yea, and that it might be firm and valid to our faith, as well as in itself, he hath hereunto added his seal, and that such a seal as renders it altogether unquestionable; for 'tis the seal of his own blood. Hence the gospel is called *the new testament in his blood*, that is seal'd and ratified in his blood, Luke ii. 20. And his blood is called *the blood of the covenant*: because the covenant and promises thereof are sealed with that blood, *Heb. ix. latter end.* Yea, more yet; if his promise and his seal be not enough, they shall have more, for to both these he has added his oath for their further security in the case; *Verily, verily,* (says he) *he that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; and again, verily, verily, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,* John v. 24, 25. *As I live,* was the form of God's oath in the old testament; and he there swears, *he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, but had rather they would turn and live,* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. And *Verily, verily,* is the form of Christ's oath in the new testament; and he there (you see) swears that souls shall live coming to him. "O, " happy we, (as one of the ancients cries out) for " whose sake God doth swear; but O unbelieving " we, if we do not believe him swearing." Thus

Christ has given us his bond, his promise, and that sealed with his blood, and to all added his oath for the further encouragement of our faith; and what can we desire more? If you have a man's promise to you for the performance of this or that, you think you are well, you judging him to be both able and faithful; but if you have his seal added to his promise, then you look upon yourselves secure of the business indeed; but if to both these you have his oath added, then you look on the business past all doubt, and you dare not question it: Why lo! Christ has given poor sinners all this to assure them that he will embrace and accept them coming to him; and O, how firm may their faith stand upon all this? And what horrid wickedness must it be so much as once to question it? True, neither his seal, nor his oath, adds any thing to the truth and certainty of the promise in itself; but to our sense and apprehension it does; and meerly out of indulgence to us and our weakness, is the one and the other added; so the Apostle tells us, *Heb. vi. 17. 18. God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.* Mark, 'twas not to confirm, or add any thing to the truth and certainty of God's counsel or covenant, that his oath was added, but it was to confirm and encourage our faith. Thus you see Christ is under bonds to receive and accept of sinners, if they come to him, and are willing of an espousal with him; and how much does this argue his heart to be in the business? O, let none ever say, will Christ accept and receive me coming to him? For indeed bonds bind him so to do. The truth is, were he under no bonds we need not question it, for his bowels would constrain him; and had he no bowels, we need not doubt it, for bonds would bind him to it. Christ must deny his word, promise, seal, oath and all, if he refuse any

soul that indeed comes to him, and desires to close in a marriage covenant with him: O, what encouragement is this!

V. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an espousal with sinners, as that he has given them a full and unquestionable assurance, that nothing (whatever) shall stand between him and them, nor prejudice their acceptance with him, in case they be willing to be espoused unto him: Should a man not only make love to a person, wait long upon her in the tenders thereof, and the like, but also give a full assurance that nothing shall stand between him and her to hinder the match, in case she be willing to accept of him; this would argue his heart to be much upon her indeed: Now, this also Christ hath done, he hath given sinners a full and firm assurance, that nothing shall prejudice their acceptance with him, nor hinder the match between him and their souls, in case they be willing to it; and is not his heart then much upon the business? This is no other than what he himself declares, *John vi. 37.* And certainly he doth not delude souls with vain words; *Him that cometh unto me,* (says he) *i. e.* he that believeth on me, he that is willing to be mine, *him I will in no wise cast out:* In no wise, or by no means, upon no account whatsoever: Nothing shall obstruct his acceptance with me; but I will receive him with a notwithstanding, notwithstanding all his vileness, all his unworthiness, all his unkindness, all his unsuitableness; notwithstanding all that either men, or devils, law or conscience can charge upon him: yea, or that unbelief itself can pretend or alledge; be it what it will, notwithstanding all, I'll receive him unto the bosom of my love. Christ's language to poor sinners, in this promise of his, and many more of like import, is such as this: Come, poor souls, be not afraid of me, whatever your condition be, and however things stand, and are stated with you, yet if you have a mind to me, and an espousal with me, assure yourselves that nothing shall obstruct your acceptance with me, nothing shall

shut up my bosom against you ; but *I will betroth you to my self for ever.* O what encouragement is here ? Come to Christ, and close with Christ in a marriage-covenant ; who would not do that, may some say ? But alas ! there are a thousand things that will hinder the match ; and stand between him and me, should I go to him. Poor soul ! this is apparently the plea and language of unbelief, and let it be silenced for ever, Christ having (as thou seest) fully assured us of the contrary. But besides, what is it that thou fearest, (or that any soul can fear) will stand between Christ and thee, to hinder an espousal with him ? Bring forth thy strong pleas, and see if they will bear any weight in the sanctuary ballance.

1. Is it outward meanness and baseness ? Possibly thou art low and mean, and base in the world ; thou art a poor forlorn despicable creature ; and this thou thinkest will stand between Christ and thee ; surely (sayest thou) Christ will never take such a contemptible worm as I am, into such a relation with himself : But sinner, this shall not hinder in the least, for Christ is no respecter of persons ; *High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, are all one in Christ,* and to Christ, *Gal. iii. 28.* Yea, does not the world tell us, that *he chooses the poor of this world, heirs of the kingdom, and rich in faith ? James ii. 5.* And again, ye see your calling, *Brethren* (says the apostle) *how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God chooses foolish, and weak, and base ones,* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. As greatness is no furtherance, so meanness and baseness is no hindrance in this case. Men indeed mind honour and greatness, they will have such as are suitable to themselves : But 'tis otherwise with Christ. Poor sinners, though thou beest never so low and mean, and base in the world ; though thou shouldst be clothed with rags ; yet if thou hast a mind to Christ, he will accept thee, and marry thee to himself ; yea, and thy soul will be as dear to him, and as precious in his sight as the soul of the greatest prince or monarch in the world.

2. Is it inward blackness and deformity? Perhaps, sinner, if thou art not outwardly mean and base, yet thou seest thyself inwardly black and deformed; thou liest in thy blood and gore, wallowing in thy sin and filth; neither is there any worth and beauty in thee, for which Christ should desire thee; and therefore, sayest thou, surely Christ will have nothing to do with me, or so much as cast an eye or look of love upon me. But soul, this shall not stand between Christ and thee neither; but if thou hast a mind to him, he will marry thee to himself notwithstanding: For indeed Christ marries not any for their beauty; but those whom he marries, he marries to make them beautiful; he marries them not for any worth of theirs, but to put a worth upon them; and indeed there are none that he espouses to himself, but he finds them black and deformed in their blood and gore, as well as thee, and so they are till he puts his beauty upon them. How sweet is that word, *Ezek. xvi. 6, 7, 8. When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, i. e. in thy sin and filth, I said unto thee, live; I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live, yea, when thou wast in thy blood, live*: Mark, three times he mentions it, *in thy blood, in thy blood, in thy blood*, to note the depth of that defilement we are all under. Well, and what then? Will Christ have any thing to do with such? Yes, he makes love to them: *Behold, thy time was the time of love*: He marries them to himself in an everlasting covenant, *I spread my skirt over thee* (says he) *and covered thy nakedness*; yea, *I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*: Yea, not only so, but he puts a beauty; yea, his own beauty and comeliness upon them: *Thou art come to excellent ornaments, and art comely through my comeliness which I have put upon thee*, as verse 14. O soul, be not discouraged, Christ will turn thy blackness into beauty, and not cast thee off because of it.

3. Is it the greatness and hainousness of thy sin and guilt? O my sins, my sins, (says the poor soul) they

are exceeding many, and exceeding great; they are many and great in themselves, and they are clothed with many and great aggravations. Few in the world ever sinned at that rate that I have done; therefore I fear that Christ will never own me so, as to take me into such a relation with himself: well, be it so; yet know, that this shall not stand between Christ and thee, if thou art willing to be espoused to him: He has promised to pardon great sins, and to accept, notwithstanding great sins, in case the soul be but willing: *Come now* (says he) *let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool*, Isa. i. 18. *Tho' your sins are as scarlet, and as crimson, i. e. Tho' they are great, foul, enormous sins; sins of a hainous and crying nature, and clothed with the greatest aggravations, yet they shall be white as snow and wool, i. e. They shall be fully done away and pardoned, so fully done away and pardoned, as if they had never been so.* Again, Isa. xliii. 24. 25. In the 24th ver. he speaks of some who had made him *to serve with their sins, and wearied him with their iniquities*: These surely were great sinners, and their sins of a hainous crying nature; and yet, at the 25th ver. what a full promise of pardon does he make to them? *I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* Poor soul, what shall I say? Hast thou abundantly sinned? Hast thou multiplied sins; He has promised *abundantly to pardon, and to multiply pardons*, Isa. lv. 7. Art thou guilty of all manner of sins? And to thy other sins, hast thou added blasphemy? He has promised, *that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, except that against the Holy Ghost*, (which thy complaining of the greatness of thy sins argues thou art not guilty of) *Matth. xii. 31.* O soul, be not discouraged because of the greatness of thy sins: Christ marries souls, not because they are not sinners, great sinners, but he marries them to take away their sins, and to discharge them from them for ever: And the greater thy sins are, the

greater will be the glory of Christ's grace (which is what he aims at) in receiving of thee into so near and glorious a relation with himself as this is: Besides, what wilt thou do with thy great sins, unless thou goest with them to Christ? Great sins argue a great need for Christ, and calls for great hastning unto Christ.

4. Is it any former neglects or refusals of thine? Possibly not only are thy sins many and great, but there is this added to all the rest, long and frequent refusals of Christ and his love. He has often called, but thou hast given him no answer; he has long wooed thee, but thou has not comply'd with him; O, the many sweet calls, gracious offers, loving tenders which he has made to thee, and thou hast despised! And this makes thee fear, that he will now have nothing to do with thee. And truly soul, this is sad, very sad; hereby Christ has lost much glory, which thou mightest have brought him; hereby thou hast lost much sweet communion, which thou might have enjoyed; hereby Christ's heart has been much grieved, which might have been prevented; and hereby the work is made much more difficult than at first it was, thy heart being grown more hard, and corruptions more strong. Thus 'tis every way very sad, that thou hast thus neglected and refused Christ; but yet neither shall this stand between him and thee, in case thou art willing to be espoused to him; for this, See *Prov. i. 20, 21, 22, 23.* *Wisdom crieth without. She uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates in the city she uttereth her words; saying, How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity; and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate know'ledge? Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Pray observe, Christ hath offered himself and his love to them, but they had refused him and it; yea, they had refused long, and refused with much contempt, How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? &c. They scorn'd the offer of Christ, and his love; and*

yet here he renews those offers to them, wherein he tells them, that none of all their refusals should prejudice their acceptance with him. in case they are willing to be his. *Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit, &c.* And soul, do not the most refuse long, and stand it out long against the offers of Christ and his grace, e'er they close with him, who yet are received and embraced by him? Be not therefore discouraged, poor soul, because of thy former neglects and refusals of Christ, but throw thyself into the arms of his love, which thou wilt certainly find wide open to receive and embrace thee.

5. Is it any revolting or backsliding of thine from him? Possibly thou hast sometimes been on thy way towards Christ, thou hast had some workings, some good resolutions and affections within thee for him; Ay, and thou hast made some profession of him; thou hast sometimes been even upon the turning point, the point of closing with Christ; and the match has been made up between him and thee; and yet after all this, thou hast revolted and backsliden from him, *playing the harlot with many lovers*, which makes thee fear, that he will now reject thee, shouldest thou go to him. And the truth is, this also is very sad; for hereby Christ has been eminently dishonoured and thy soul has been eminently endangered; But yet be not discouraged, for this shall not stand between Christ and thee, if yet thou art but willing to be espoused to him; Christ offers himself and his grace to such as these; he promises to heal backslidings; *Jer. iii. 1. Tho' thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord.* And *v. 12. Return thou backsliding Israel, And I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful.* So *Hos. ii. 19. I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me.* Thee; Who? Why as revolting and backsliding a people as ever were in the world; so you will find in the beginning of the chapter. There is hope then (you see) for revolters and backsliders; therefore be not discouraged, but

go to him, and he will not cast thee out. Well soul, here's encouragement enough for thee, notwithstanding all thy vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness. And to add to thy encouragement yet, know, Christ has received multitudes that were every way as vile, sinful and unworthy as thou art. What dost thou think of *Manasseh*, who was a forcerer, and an idolater? What dost thou think of *Paul*, who was a persecutor and a blasphemer? What dost thou think of *Mary Magdalen*, who had seven devils in her? What dost thou think of *Rahab*, who was an harlot? What dost thou think of multitudes of those who crucified Christ, but afterwards believed? These were all great sinners, and yet Christ received them into the arms of his love. What dost thou think of the black list and catalogue of sinners among the *Corinthians*, mentioned *1 Cor. vi. 9, 10* who were *drunkards, thieves, murderers, adulterers, idolaters, abusers of themselves with mankind*, and the like? What dost thou think of them, *Titus iii. 3.* who were *foolish, disobedient, living in envy, hateful, and hating one another, served divers lusts and pleasures*? Surely these are as vile, as sinful, as worthless as thou art, and had as much to stand between Christ and them; and yet they found grace in Christ's sight, upon their looking to him. Indeed there is never a soul now in heaven but was by nature every way as vile, sinful, and unworthy of Christ, as thou: They lay under the same pollution, they wallowed in the same blood, they were fill'd with the same spirit of opposition against God and his ways, that thou dost, and art; yea and multitudes of them were as vile and sinful by practice also, as thou; they acted out the sin and enmity of their natures as highly against God and Christ, as thou hast done; and yet these Christ received, else they had not been in heaven. In a word, heaven (as one observes) is an house full of the miracles of Christ's free grace: There's idolatrous *Manasseh* among the true worshippers of God: There's oppressing *Zaccheus* among the spirits of just men made perfect. There's bla-

phemous *Paul* among the host of angels, lauding, praising, and singing *Hallelujahs* to God and the Lamb: And there's *Mary Magdalen*, that had seven devils, among the Saints of the most high, who are filled even to overflowing with the seven spirits of God. O! who then would be discouraged? Yea, soul, all thy vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness, does but, as it were, qualify thee for Christ and his free grace. My sinful wants and unworthiness (says *Rutherford*) have qualified me for Christ and his grace. Cast thyself therefore fully upon him notwithstanding all, not doubting thine acceptance with him.

VI. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon espousal with sinners, as that he delights and rejoices in nothing more hardly, than in the nuptials between him and them: And O, how should this draw and allure us to him! Should you see a young man rejoicing in the sense of an espousal between himself and such or such an one whom he loved, you might well conclude, that his heart was much upon her: And is it not thus here? Christ rejoices in the sight and sense of an espousal between himself and sinners; and how much does this argue his heart to be in the business? This I will give you in three propositions.

1. This is what he rejoiced and delighted himself in the thoughts of from all eternity. Thus much he himself tells us, *Prov. viii. 30, 31. Then, namely, from everlasting, was I by him: as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.* These are Christ's words, and in them he tells you where he was, and what he had been doing from eternity; he was with the Father, and rejoiced before him: But what did he rejoice in? Truly, next to the Father and himself, his rejoicing was in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. He delighted himself in the thoughts of saving poor sinners, and espousing them unto himself in or-

der thereunto. O, how much does this argue his heart to be in the business!

2. As he thus delighted and rejoiced in the thoughts of it before hand; so when at any time a poor soul is actually espoused to him, then he rejoices afresh, and is delighted afresh. Hence the day of espousals is called *the day of the gladness of his heart*, Cant. iii. 11. The day of espousals between Christ and a poor sinner, is a day of gladness and rejoicing to the Father; a day of gladness and rejoicing to the blessed spirit, a day of gladness and rejoicing to the holy angels, and spirits of just men made perfect; *For there is joy in heaven*, at this, Luke xv. 7. But 'tis especially a day of gladness and rejoicing to Christ the bridegroom. O, to see poor sinners come in and give up themselves to him in marriage covenant; this is the joy, the rest, the satisfaction of the soul: Hence it is said, *He shall see of the travel of his soul, and be satisfied*, Isa. liii. 11. 'Tis a great grief and trouble to Christ, that which wounds his very soul, when having wooed poor sinners, and time after time made love to them; they notwithstanding are shy of him, and will not close with him in a marriage covenant: Hence he complains as he does, John v. 41. *You will not come to me that you might have life.* And Matth. xxiii. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not?* He speaks complainingly, and as one grieved at heart at their neglects of him; yea, this was that which made him weep, as he did over *Jerusalem*, Luke xix. 41, 42. Behold the joy of the whole earth weeping! And why? Because of their refusals of him and his grace, and the woful destruction that for these refusals were coming upon them. Indeed, this is what reflects great dishonour upon his name, pours great contempt upon his grace, and is directly contrary to the whole design of his undertaking, as Mediator, and so cannot but be grievous to him: So on the contrary, when souls come freely in, and give up themselves in a marriage relation to him, he is glad and rejoices his heart: O, how should this

draw souls to him ! sinner, why may not this day be made the day of the gladness of Christ's heart, by being a day of espousals between him and thee ? He has seen many a day of grief of heart, and trouble of heart, because of thy standing out against him, and refusing the offers of his love : O, now let him see one day of joy of heart, and gladness of heart, by thy closing up with him in a marriage covenant.

3. As Christ delights and rejoices when souls are espoused to him ; so being espoused to him, he delights and rejoices in this espousal for ever : Men marry such or such, and they rejoice therein at present, but their joy does not last. 'Tis otherwise with Christ, he did rejoice in the thoughts of it from all eternity ; he does rejoice in the being and accomplishment of it here in time, and he will rejoice in the consummation of it in heaven for ever ; The truth is, his joy is not complete, till the marriage be complete ; nor will his joy ever end, till that end, which will never be (as in its place may be shewn.) Thus you see a little what Christ's heart is, and how much set upon this business, as well as what manner of husband he is, and what great things he does for all his spouses. And now after all, what do you say ? Art thou for Christ or no ? Shall the nuptial go on between him and your souls, or shall it not ? Soul, what answer must I give my Lord and Master that sent me for thee ? 'Tis but a little while, and he will call both thee and me to an account concerning these things ; and I must say, Lord, I wooed that soul for thee ; I besought him to be espoused unto thee ; and so far as I was able, I displayed thy beauty, thy riches, thy glory before him : I opened thy heart to him, shewed him thy love, and thy willingness to be espoused to him, hoping that the cords of thy love would draw him ; and with my whole strength entreated him to give up himself in a marriage-covenant to thee. Well, and what was the issue ? Lord, thou knowest. But, soul, what answer must I return ? Must I be put to say, Lord, I laboured in vain, and spent my strength in

vain, for he made light of all, and would have none, either of thee or thy love? O put me not to make this dismal answer; rather let me have cause to say, *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me: Behold, this soul, and that soul, and many souls were won over to thee. Amen.*

C H A P. X.

Which directs souls, and shews them the way how to attain unto this sweet and blessed espousal with Jesus Christ.

AN Espousal with Christ! what more sweet? What more desirable? And who that understands himself, would not covet it, before any thing this world affords? No husband like Christ, and no happiness like an espousal to him. But the question is, how we may attain hereunto? Truly, soul, the work is great, and 'tis the divine spirit alone that does and can tie the marriage-knot between Christ and thee: But he works in this, as well as in other cases, in and by the use of means; and there are several things highly incumbent upon thee, and which must be attended by thee, as ever thou wouldst attain to an acquaintance with this blessed espousal.

I. Wouldest thou be espoused to Christ? Then labour to be deeply sensible of thy utter estrangement from him by nature; as also of thy woful misery by reason of that estrangement. A deep sense of our estrangement from Christ, and of our misery by reason of that estrangement, is on good step towards a conjugal union and relation to him; and without the one, we are never like to attain unto the other. Labour therefore for this.

1. Labour to be deeply sensible of your estrangement from Christ by nature. Naturally we are all strangers to Christ, strangers to all conjugal-union and communion with him. We know not what any such thing means. As 'twas with the *Ephesians*, so 'tis with us all by nature, they were and we are with-

out Christ in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. And not only without him, but also far from him, as it follows *verse* 13. I may truly say to every natural man and woman in this, as *Peter* did to *Simon* in another case, *Acts* viii. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: Thou knowest not what union and communion with this sweet Lord means: Yea, not only are we by nature estranged from Christ; but moreover we are at enmity with him, and filled with hatred and opposition against him: We as those mentioned, Luke xix. 14. Do hate him, and would not have him to reign over us.* Naturally we are at enmity with Christ, and with every thing that is his; with his person, with his presence, with his spirit, with his kingdom, with his laws, and ordinances, with his graces; with his righteousness, and the like. His person is too holy for us, his presence too pure, his spirit too convincing, his kingdom too spiritual, his laws and ordinances too strict, his graces too bright, his righteousness too opposite to self; and so we hate all, and are at enmity with all: Yea, we are at enmity with the very way of life and salvation by him: *Touching the gospel, they are enemies,* says the apostle, which is spoken of the *Jews*, but true of all by nature, *Rom. xi. 28.* We would live but not by Christ; we would be saved, but not by Christ: Thus naturally we are all estranged from him; and thus high does our estrangement raise, which we must be deeply sensible of, if ever we get union and communion in a conjugal-way with him; Therefore work this a little upon your thoughts, till you find your heart begin to bleed and relent over it.

2. Labour to be deeply sensible of your exceeding great misery by reason of this estrangement. As we are all naturally without Christ, so our misery herein is exceeding great. So much the apostle holds forth in the place before quoted, *Eph. ii. 12.* where he speaks of our being *without Christ*, as our misery; yea, as the spring and foundation of all our misery, and therefore that is first mentioned: The *Ephesians* were, and

we are (as he there tells us) *without the covenant, without hope, and without God in the world*; Misery enough for any soul to ly under; and the inlet and foundation of all is, their and our being *without Christ*. As to have Christ (says a learned interpreter upon this place) is the foundation of all good; so to be without Christ, is the beginning and foundation of all evil, and inlet to all woe and misery, and what leaves us in a most deplored estate for ever. Take a taste, and but a taste of this your misery, and then work the sense of it upon your own souls.

1. Being without Christ, you are destitute of all good, you are without life, without grace, without peace, without pardon, without comfort, without righteousness, without heaven, without salvation, *without hope, and without God*, (as you have it in the same place) *Ephes. ii. 2.* without the favour of God, without the presence of God, without the life of God, without the image of God, without the Spirit of God, and being thus without God, you are without all true good, and true happiness, according to the old and true maxim, *sine summo bonno nihil bonum*; without the chief good there is nothing good.

2. Being without Christ, you are in bondage to sin and Satan, which is the worst bondage in the world. Naturally all are the slaves and vassals of these cruel lords: Hence we are said, *to fulfil the devil's lust*, John viii. 44. And, *as the lusts of the devil, so the wills and lusts of the flesh*, Ephes. ii. 2. *to be the servants of sin, and to serve divers lusts and pleasures*, and the like: And as naturally all are thus in bondage to sin and the devil, so there is no redemption from the bondage but by Christ, and that in a way of union with him. *If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*, saith he himself to the Jews, John viii. 36. They were glorying in their privilege, that they were *Abraham's seed*, and never were in bondage to any man. True, says Christ, but ye are in a worse bondage than a bondage to man, in bondage to sin, in bondage to your lusts:

For *he that commiteth sin, is the servant of sin.* And this bondage none but the Son can free you from; and therefore, until freed by him, you remain under it. O how sore a bondage is this, to be under the command of sin, to be at the beck of every base and unclean lust, and to be carried captive *by the devil at his will!* This is such a bondage, as that the bondage of *Israel* under their task-masters in *Egypt*, and the bondage of *Turkish* slaves, who are kept at oar and gally, is freedom to it. As to serve Christ is the greatest liberty, so to serve sin is the cruellest bondage.

3. Being without Christ, and union with Christ, you are rejected of God. *Know ye not* (says the apostle) *that except Christ be in you, ye are reprobates?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Know ye not?* As if he should say, 'tis a most clear, manifest, and evident truth, that unless you have union with Christ, you are reprobates, *i. e.* you are unapproved of God, you are out of his favour, both your persons and services are rejected by him. To the same purpose is that *Gal. iv. 22.* where we read of two mothers, and two sons: The two mothers were types of the two covenants, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, as appears by *ver. 24.* The two sons are types of two sorts of persons living in the church; one born after the flesh, the other by promise; one belonging to the first, the other to the second covenant. Well, what's the condition of these? Why, the one is in a state of rejection, and the other of acceptance. They that belong to the second covenant, are owned and embraced in the arms of love; the other are cast out (as you may see in the sequel of the chapter :) besides all our acceptance with God, is in Christ, and thro' Christ, *Ephes. i. 6.* Out of him therefore we are in a state of rejection. O how sad does this speak your condition to be! for men, yea, for good men to reject and disown us, is what may be born especially when God owns and smiles: But for God to disown and reject us, this is terrible indeed, tho' all the world should own us, and smile upon us. How terrible is that

word? *Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them, Jer. vi. 30.* If God owns, and smiles, 'tis no matter who frowns; but if he frowns and rejects, who can own or smile to the relief of the soul?

4. Being without Christ, you are under the law, and so under the curse. And how sad is this! as there are but two covenants, the old and the new: and but two heads of those covenants, the first, or the second *Adam*; and so all men do belong to, and are found in the one or the other of these. Whilst therefore you are strangers to Christ, you are under the law: and being under the law, you are under the curse: For, says the apostle, *As many as are under the law; are under the curse: For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 13.* The law has no pity, no sparing for offenders; but for every breach thereof, lays the soul under the curse. Now we have all broken the law; we all broke it in *Adam*, being in him as in an head, and we have all broken it ten thousand times over in our own persons, and by both are fallen under the curse thereof. And, soul, dost thou know what the curse of the law means? It carries in it death and condemnation for ever. Being under the law, we are cursed in our persons, and cursed in our comforts: The wrath of God lies upon our souls, and the curse of God is in all our enjoyments; our very blessings are accurs'd to us, *Mal. ii. 2.* We read in scripture of *the people of God's curse*, and thou art one of them, soul, whoever thou art, that art out of Christ; O, how woful, how deplorable a condition is this!

5. Being without Christ, and estranged from Christ, you ly under the guilt of innumerable sins, which you alone must bear for ever. 'Tis in and by Christ alone, that souls are discharged from the guilt of sin. And who are they whom he discharges from guilt; but such as are found in him, are under a marriage covenant with him? *Those his blood cleanses*

from all sin, 1 John i. 7. And in him have they redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin, Ephes. i. 7. As for others, he tells them plainly, *They shall die in their sins*, John viii. 24. O how sad a condition is this! Soul, thou art guilty of a multitude of sins, the least of which has evil enough in it to damn thee eternally. Thou hast thousands, and ten thousands of scarlet crimson sins, sins cloathed with black and crying aggravations lying upon thee; and to have all these in the full weight of the guilt and punishment of them, charged upon thee by the great God for ever; How miserable does this speak thy condition to be!

6. Being estranged from Christ, you are under a necessity of sinning, and so of greatning your own damnation daily. A man out of Christ, does do, can do nothing but sin; for *he is not subject to the law of God, nor can he be*, Rom. viii. 8. And as he is ever sinning, so he is ever *treasuring up wrath unto himself*, Rom. ii. 5. O how sad a condition is this! This is *dura necessitas*, (as *Austin* calls it) and speaks a man's condition to be very doleful. To be always sinning against God, and always treasuring up wrath to a man's own soul, this is next to hell, in some sort worse. To give you the sum of all:

7. Being estranged from Christ, you have nothing to satisfy divine justice, which is ready to seize upon you: nothing to pacify divine wrath, which is ready to break forth against you; nothing to stand between divine revenge, and your sinful souls. What shall I say? You have many accusers, and by them many heavy charges brought in against you; and being without Christ, you have no advocate to plead your cause, none to speak a good word in heaven for you; And is not that sad? you are deeply in debt; you owe your ten thousand talents to divine justice; and being without Christ, you have nothing to pay, but are in danger of being cast into the prison of eternal darkness, whence there is no redemption. And is not that sad? You are under an obligation to much

duty; and being without Christ, you are under an utter impossibility of performing any of it acceptably. You are under a judgment of condemnation, and being without Christ, you have nothing that can secure you one day, one hour, one moment more on this side everlasting burnings: And O, how sad and miserable is this! Thus you see both your estrangement from Christ, and also your misery (in part) by reason of that estrangement. Now, as ever you would get union and communion with him, labour to be deeply sensible of both these.

II. Wouldest thou indeed be espoused to Christ? then labour to be soundly convinced, and deeply sensible of the greatness and hainousness of the sin of refusing Christ, and the offers of his love. Poor soul, thou standest it out against Christ; he wooes, and calls, and invites thee to himself, but thou slightest and refuses all; and this thou thinkest a small matter; but let me tell thee, this is a most hainous and crying sin: To swear, to murder, to steal, to be drunk, to be unclean, and the like; these thou lookest upon to be as black and horrid things: Indeed, well thou mayst, for they are sins of a more than ordinary hainous and abominable nature: But yet know that thy sin in rejecting Christ, and the offers of his love, is greater and more provoking than all these, This indeed is the great sin, and the sin thou must in an especial manner be sensible of, if ever thou art united to Christ; So much Christ himself tells us, in that known place, *John* xvi. 8, 9. *He* (says he, speaking of the spirit whom he promised to send) *shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me.* Unbelief then is the great sin that the spirit convinces souls of: And what's unbelief, but the neglect and refusal of Christ, and the offers of his love made to us in the gospel? *He shall convince the world of sin because they believe not in me; i. e. De illo magno & grandi incredulitatis peccato:* He shall convince them of that grand sin of unbelief, (as a learned man expounds it;) as if Christ should say, he shall make

men see the black and hainous nature of the sin of rejecting me and my love: He shall humble them for it, and set them a bleeding over it. This sin of rejecting Christ, some of the schoolmen have called, *maximum peccatum*, the greatest sin of all: And indeed, next to the unpardonable sin, what greater? This is a sin most directly and immediately against Christ and the gospel. O, for a vile wretched sinner to shut the door of his soul against Christ and the king of glory, and deny him entertainment, to refuse and reject the frequent offers of him and his love; how great a sin must this be? And, soul, to convince thee the better of it, I shall suggest a few considerations to thee, the holding forth a little of its black and horrid evil.

1. Consider, That the neglect and refusal of Christ and his love, is a sin against a special and eminent command, and therefore a great and crying sin: The greater and more eminent the command is, which we transgress and sin against, the greater our sin and guilt is in transgressing that command. Now, God does not only command us to receive and embrace Christ and his love: But this command of his, is a great, signal and eminent command: So St *John* tells us, *1 John iii. 23. This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.* What is it to believe on the name of *Jesus Christ*, but to receive and embrace Christ offering himself in the gospel to us, and live upon him, having so received and embraced him? Now (says he) *This is the commandment*, his great, his special commandment in a most single and eminent manner, and Christ himself asserts the same thing, *John vi. 28, 29.* In the 28. verse they ask him, *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* His answer in the 29. verse is, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent; i. e. That ye receive and embrace me, and live upon me, by believing: This is [the] work of God, the great work which he commands you, and expects from you: Believing (as Cal-*

vin observes upon this place) is not called *the work of God*; because 'tis of God's operation, (as you have it elsewhere) or that which God works in us; but because 'tis the great thing which he commands and requires of us. To reject and refuse Christ then, is a sin against a signal and eminent command, indeed against the great command of the gospel; and therefore must needs be a great and crying sin. More particularly;

1. The neglect and refusal of Christ and his love, is a sin against a clear and express command of God, a command wherein the authority of God does peculiarly and eminently shine forth: So much is held forth in the place mention'd before, *1 John iii. 28. This is his commandment*, (says he, speaking of the commandment of faith) his express commandment, a commandment wherein his authority is evidently and peculiarly seen; the authority of God shines forth in all his commands, but especially in this above the rest: Therefore this you see has an emphasis put upon it: *This is his commandment*: Now the more clearly and eminently the authority of God shines forth in any command, the greater our sin and guilt is in transgressing that command.

2. The neglect and refusal of Christ and his love, is a sin against a command, wherein the heart of God and Christ does much ly, and is therefore a great sin. This is a true rule, that the more the mind or heart of the law giver is in any law or command, the greater is our sin and guilt in the breach and transgression of that law or command: Now God's command to us, to receive Christ by believing, is a command wherein his own heart, as well as the heart of Christ, does much ly: Indeed there is nothing in all the world that the heart of God and Christ is more set upon, or desirous of, than this, that souls should embrace Christ by believing, and become one with him in a marriage-covenant: Witness the freeness of their offers, the frequency of their calls, the importunateness of their pleas, the patient-

ness of their waitings, the affectionateness of their entreaties, the friendliness of their upbraidings, the patheticalness of their lamentings, the sweetness of their wooings, the unweariness of their drawings, and the graciousness of their dealings, in reference hereunto. But you have already seen, how much the heart of Christ, and in him the heart of the Father is in this business. Now to transgress such a command, a command wherein the heart of God and Christ does so much ly, and to run counter to that which they much desire. O, what a sin must this needs be!

The neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin against a command, which has virtually all the commands of God in it; and so in the breach and transgression thereof, we break and transgress all. And O, how great a sin then must this be! to believe on Christ, is comprehensive of all that God commands and requires of us: this is so his commandment, as that in obeying this, we obey all; and in violating this, we violate all; and so he esteems and accounts it. This is evident from *John vi. 21, 29. What shall we do, (say they) that we may work the works of God? This is the work of God, (says Christ) to believe on him whom he hath sent*: Pray mark, they speak of [works] in the plural number; they would know what all these works were which God required. and what the extent of the command was: And Christ in his answer reduces all to one, and that is faith, by which he shews, that all is in vain without faith, so faith is virtually all that God requires: *This is the work of God (says he)* as if he should say, Here's all in one, to believe on, and receive me, is comprehensive of all: And accordingly, my beloved, to reject Christ and his love, is to break all at once, and to violate all at once; 'tis to rebel against, and pour contempt upon the whole mind and will of God at once, and in effect to renounce all duty and allegiance to him. Suitable whereunto is the observation of a learned man upon that place, *John xvi. 8, 9. Christ here (says he) calls unbelief [sin]*

simply and absolutely, because that sin comprehends all sin in it. O how great a sin then must this be!

4. The neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin against a command of much love. All God's commands have love in them; they are designed by him for our good, (as the scripture tells us;) but especially this command of his, that we should receive and embrace his Son; For what is this command, but a command to us to be saved, a command to us to be happy! What is this, but a commanding us to live for evermore, to be eternally blessed in and with himself? And O, how great a sin must the transgression of such a command be! Did God command us any hard or severe thing, something that tended to our prejudice, and not our happiness, that were somewhat; But when he commands us nothing but to be happy, and to be happy in the best way; O how great a sin must it be to transgress such a command!

2. Consider, the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin, which in a peculiar manner derogates from him, and pours great contempt upon him, and therefore a great sin. The more contempt any sin pours upon Christ, and the more it derogates from him, the greater that sin is. Now, what sin derogates more from Christ, or pours greater contempt upon him, than the neglect and refusal of him offering himself to us, does? This is a sin which takes the crown off from Christ's head, and throws it in the dust; it every way, and in all respects pours great contempt upon him.

1. This sin vilifies and pours contempt upon the person of Christ. Christ's person is infinitely amiable, and accordingly to vilify and contemn his person, must be a great sin, and contracts great guilt, and this the refusal of him does; Hence call'd a *treading under foot the Son of God*, (which argues the highest contempt imaginable) *Heb. x. 29.* Every refusal of Christ carries that language concerning him in it, *Isa. liii. 2.* *When we see him, there is no beauty in him for which we should desire him; He has neither form nor*

comeliness in him: He is a person of no worth, no desirableness. O, what contempt is this to be cast upon Christ! and how much does it derogate from him!

2 This sin vilifies, and pours contempt upon the work, office, and undertaking of Christ as mediator, upon all that he has done and suffer'd; with all the riches of his grace, and his love, manifested therein: Hence 'tis called, *as a treading of the Son of God under foot*; so *an accounting his blood a common and an unholy thing*, a thing of no worth, no use, no value, no excellency, *Heb. x. 29.* Great, my beloved, was the work and undertaking of Christ, as our mediator; and great were the things which he both did and suffered in the discharge of that work and undertaking; great also was his grace and love towards us in all, and accordingly great must our sin and guilt be, in pouring contempt thereon, which we do by refusing of him: Hereby we pour contempt upon all his acts, and all his offices as mediator: upon all his merits, and all his purchases, upon all his grace and love in bleeding and dying for us: We do hereby in effect say, that neither Christ, nor any thing which he has purchased, is worth accepting and embracing: That we had rather that he had never died, never become a days-man between God and us, that he might have kept his blood to himself, and we will not thank him for shedding of it; that we need neither him, nor any thing that is his: Hereby we do in effect say, that the whole gospel is a cheat, a lie, a meer delusion: That Christ is an hard matter, and rules with rigour; that salvation is little worth, and the like. O, what horrid contempt of Christ is this!

3. This sin plainly prefers a poor, base, vile lust before Christ, and all the glorious riches and treasures of Christ. And O, what contempt of him is this! Why do men refuse Christ, and the offers of his love! Surely 'tis for the sake, and from the love of some lust or other, either *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life*: And if so, then by refusing of him, they do really prefer this lust before him, and

all the treasures of his grace and love. And thus indeed you find it to be, *Matth. xxii. 1.* as also *Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20.* Where Christ offers himself, with all his treasures, to poor sinners, who yet slight and refuse both him and them. And why so? *The one has a farm, the other a merchandize;* and all have some carnal concern to mind: *The sum* is, they have a lust to be satisfied; and therefore Christ and all the treasures of his love, must be rejected: By refusing of Christ, we do in effect say, that there is more good, more sweetness, more happiness in a lust, in a little carnal, worldly pleasure and advantage, than there is in Christ, and all that is his. Hereby we do in effect say, that men are deceived in Christ, that the word of God makes a false report of him, that he is not such a Saviour, nor is his salvation so great as the one and the other is represented to be. O, what contempt is this, to be cast upon Christ! *Esau* (you know) is said to *despise his birth-right*: And how? *By preferring a mess of pottage, or a morsel of meat before it,* *Gen. xxv. 34.* But, O, how much more do we condemn Christ and his love, by preferring a base *vile* lust before him and it! Surely, greater contempt of Christ than this, can't well be found. And how great then must the sin of the refusal of Christ be, and how much should we tremble at it?

3. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin, which in an eminent manner darkens and opposes the glory of God, and reflects the highest dishonour upon him of all others; and therefore a great sin: The more any sin darkens and opposes the glory of God, the greater the guilt of that sin is: For (first) the more any sin opposes the glory of God, and reflects dishonour upon him, the more contrary it is to the highest good; and the more contrary any sin is to the highest good, the greater the guilt of it must needs be. And (secondly) the more any sin opposes the glory of God, and reflects dishonour upon him, the more it thwarts and contradicts the highest end of man: And the more any sin thwarts and contra-

dicts the highest end of man, the greater the guilt of that sin is.

Now the neglect and refusal of Christ, is what eminently opposes the glory of God, and reflects dishonour upon him: The reception and entertainment of Christ puts an honour upon the Father. Indeed every act of faith honours God; *Rom. iv. 20.* And especially this great and fundamental act of faith, in embracing Christ. So on the other hand, the neglect and refusal of Christ, is what reflects dishonour upon God, it throws his glory in the dust; and hence 'tis that this sin is so exceeding provoking to him, as in the scripture 'tis represented to be: Particularly take here two things.

1. This sin of refusing Christ is what slights and contemns all the glorious excellencies and perfections of God at once; and so can't but cast very great dishonour upon him, and be very opposite to his glory in Christ. My beloved all the glorious excellencies and perfections of God are eminently manifested and display'd: In him do all the glorious counsels of his grace and love meet, and in refusing him, we despise and pour contempt upon all. In him does his love eminently shine forth, and the fulness of it rest, *1 John iv. 9, 10.* In him is justice, righteousness and holiness eminently manifested and display'd, *Rom. iii. 25, 26.* In him does his wisdom, yea, his manifold wisdom appear and reveal itself. In a word, whole God is manifested and revealed in him, and withal tender'd to the embraces of our faith and love: In every offer of Christ made to us in the gospel, God does in effect say to us, Whatever I am, or can do as God, that I'll be, to do for you, to make you happy for ever: Accordingly to refuse Christ must needs pour contempt upon all: It slights and pours contempt upon the grace of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the justice of God, the holiness of God, the fulness and all sufficiency of God, and all the ancient glorious counsels of his love concerning souls; To refuse Christ, is in

effect to say, that the grace of God is no grace, at least not worthy of our acceptance; That his justice and holiness are not to be regarded, and that we value them not; that his wisdom is folly, and his power weakness; that his fulness has little in it, and is no way able to satisfy us, and make us happy; that a broken cistern is as good as that fountain of living waters; and hereby we downright deny his faithfulness, and put the lie upon him, 1 *John* v. 10. We do in effect say, that the God of truth is a liar, that his witness and testimony is not to be credited, that his word of promise is a meer delusion, and for no other use, than to beguile souls; O, what contempt, what dishonour must all this cast upon the blessed God, and what horrible wickedness must it be? "To make God a liar (says a learned man) is an horrible and execrable impiety; thereby we take that from him which is most dear and proper to him." O, tremble, soul, tremble at the blackness and hellishness of this sin!

2. The sin of refusing Christ, is what is directly opposite to the highest design of God for his own glory, and robs him of that glory which is most dear to him. What, my beloved, was the highest design that ever God laid and carried on for his own glory? Verily, 'twas Christ, and the salvation of sinners by Christ; He design'd himself a revenue of glory in making the world, and he does design himself a revenue of glory in all he does in governing the world; but that wherein he has designed the highest revenue of glory to himself is, the mystery of Christ, and salvation by Christ; so much is evident from *Ephes.* i. 11, 12, 14. *In whom* (says he, speaking of Christ) *we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory;* and again, *ver. 14. unto the praise of his glory;* The sum is this, that God's glory was his great end in the dispensation of Christ, and our salvation by him; and also that in and by that

dispensation he did design the highest revenue of glory to himself. For pray observe, first, he calls it, *The praise of his glory*, the splendor and highest emanation of his glory. (Secondly) He repeats this design of God *to the praise of his glory*; and again, *to the praise of his glory*; which notes this to be his grand design for his glory. And again, what is that glory that is most near to God? Verily, 'tis the glory of his grace; grace is the darling attribute, and the glory of his grace is most dear to him; Hence this has been peculiarly his design in the whole of the mystery of Christ; so the same Apostle tells, *Ephes. i. 6.* who having before spoken of the great mysteries of predestination and redemption by Christ, here in *verse 6.* tells you, what was God's great design in all, *viz. The praise of the glory of his grace*; 'tis the crowning of grace, and the enthroning of grace; which God in a peculiar manner delights in; Now, if the highest design of God for his own glory, be by the mystery of Christ, and our salvation by Christ, and the glory of his grace be most dear to him; then 'tis clear that our refusing of Christ is most opposite to the highest design that God ever carry'd on for his own glory, and robs him of that glory which is most dear to him; for alas! This is in effect to say, That God has laid out no grace upon sinners in the dispensation of Christ, and that he deserves no glory upon the account of that dispensation; this is in effect to tell him, that neither his Christ, nor his grace in him, is worth minding, worth receiving; and that we are no ways beholden to him for the one, or the other. And O, what dishonour must this reflect upon God, and how darkning to his glory! And accordingly, soul, let thee and I tremble at it, and at the blackness and horridness of that sin that has such a dreadful effect.

4. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin which directly and immediately murders the soul, and damns it eternally, and therefore must needs be a great sin; that sin that does most directly

and immediately murder the soul, and destroy it eternally, must needs be a great sin, and should be greatly dreaded by us. And what sin is it that does this, but our neglect and refusal of Christ? And, soul, that thou mayst be the more deeply convinced of this, seriously weigh the following propositions.

First; That the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin which rejects the only remedy of sinful souls. Poor sinners are in themselves dead, lost, undone, and perishing for ever; they are sick, and sick to death; they are sinful and sinful to damnation; and there is one, and but one remedy for them, and that's Christ; Christ and his blood, Christ and his grace, Christ and his fulness; besides this, *There is no balm in Gilead, no physician there for them; neither is there salvation in any other*, Acts iv. 14. Therefore by refusing and rejecting him, they refuse and reject the only remedy: He indeed is a complete, as well as an only remedy; he is able, and as willing as *he is able to save to the very uttermost*, as the scripture tells us; But they by rejecting of him, exclude themselves from his saving efficacy, and so thereby do directly murder their own souls.

2. That the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin which binds all a man's other sins fast to him. 'Tis a great and weighty saying, which a worthy divine has; "Unbelief (says he) which is properly the neglect and refusal of Christ) binds all a man's sins fast to his soul, and damnation fast to his sins." 'Tis indeed the bond of all our guilt and all our misery; that which makes the curse cleave close to us for ever; and while a man remains in this sin, 'tis impossible that he should be acquitted and discharged from the guilt of any one of all his sins. 'Tis (I remember) *Austin's* observation upon that place, *John xvi. 8, 9.* Where Christ tells us, *That his Spirit shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in him;* "Christ (says he) instances in the sin of infidelity in a special manner, because that sin remaining, all our other sins remain; but that being taken away, all

others are forgiven." Faith (as one of the ancients expresses it) *delet omnia peccata* blots out all sins; but unbelief that binds all fast upon us: Hence that word of Christ, *If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins*, i. e. your sins shall cleave close to you to the very death, *John viii. 24*. This will be further evident in the next proposition. Therefore,

3. That though all sin be killing and damning, yet no sin shall ever damn or destroy us, unless we add thereunto the sin of neglect or refusal of Christ; 'Tis true, every sin is damning; sin within, sin without; *The wages of sin is death*, *Rom. vi. last*. And the apostle tells us, *There is a just recompence of reward due to every transgression and disobedience*, *Heb. i. 2*. But though every sin be damning, yet whatever a man's sins are, though never so many, never so great, they shall, they can never damn him, in case he receives and embraces Christ: Nor indeed can any of all a man's sins be said to be the immediate cause of his damnation, but his refusing of Christ. Indeed, under the law the immediate cause of man's perishing was a sin in general; But under the gospel, the only immediate cause of men's perishing, is the rejection of Christ and his grace through unbelief: So much Christ himself tells us, in that known place, *John iii. 18*. *He that believeth on the Son, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God: He that believeth on Christ, is not condemned: And why so? Is it because he has no sins to condemn him? No, but because believing on Christ, all his sins are done away; but he that believeth not on him, is condemned already: And why? Is it because he is a sinner in general, or because his sins are many, and great sins? No, but because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God*. The sum of all is this: The immediate cause of man's condemnation, is not this sin, or that sin, but their refusing of Christ by unbelief: Hence you have it so frequently up and down the gospel; *He that believeth, shall be saved:*

He that believeth not, shall be damned, and the like. Well then, if our refusing, of Christ be the rejecting of the only remedy of sinful souls; if it be what binds all a man's sins fast upon him; and if none of all a man's other sins, though many and great, should or could never damn him, were not this sin of refusing Christ added to them; then certainly this is that sin which does most directly and immediately murder the soul: O, how great a sin then does this speak it to be! murder is a great sin, an iniquity to be punished by the judge; nor do we look upon a murderer fit to live; but no murder like to a soul-murder, nor should we suffer this soul-murderer to live one moment.

5. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin which argues you to be really in love with your sins, which truly and indeed chuses death rather than life, loves darkness more than light, and which leaves you without the least colour of excuse or room of appeal for ever: And O, what a black and horrid sin must this then be! a little of each.

1. This sin of neglecting and refusing Christ, is what really argues you to be in love with your sins, and to have slight thoughts of them: For men to act sin, is bad; but to have slight thoughts of sin, and to be in love with it, is much worse. Sin being against an infinite good, even infinitely contrary to the blessed God, has in a sort an infinite evil in it; and to be in love with that which has an infinite evil in it, O, how dreadful a thing is this! yet this your refusal of Christ carries in it: For pray mark, had not you slight thoughts of sin, you would not refuse the pardon of sin when offered you, but would account it worthy of all acceptation; and were you not in love with your sins; yea, greatly in love with them, you would not chuse and desire to continue in your sins; much less would you refuse and reject so great a good, as Christ is, for the sake of your sins. Should a condemned malefactor refuse the king's free pardon, would not this argue him to have slight thoughts of death, yea, to be in love with it, and prefer it before

life? As clearly does your refusing of Christ argue you to have slight thoughts of sin, and to be in love with it; O, were you not in love with your sins, you would be glad of a discharge and deliverance from them, and would with all readiness and joyfulness embrace it, when freely offered to you, as in Christ it is.

2. This sin of refusing Christ, is what truly and indeed speaks you to love darkness more than light, and to chuse death rather than life: 'Tis what prefers sin and death before Christ and life, and grace; O what a black sin then must it be! This Christ himself asserts concerning it, and that as an high aggravation of it, and what makes it doubly damning, *John iii. 19. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.* Christ and the good things of Christ, are here called light; on the other hand, sin and death, sin and the miseries that attend it, are called darkness: Now (says Christ) men by unbelief, and refusing of me, do declare, that they love this darkness before this light: Men by refusing of me, do in effect love, chuse, prefer sin, and death, and darkness before me, and my grace, me and that eternal life which I would give them: O, what a sin is this! Christ may truly say to sinners, as *Moses* to them of old, *Deut. xxx. 19. I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore chuse life, that ye may live.* Now, for them to chuse death, and reject life; to chuse the curse and reject the blessing: This is a dreadful sin indeed and the more dreadful: On the one hand, because the light is so lovely and amiable, and on the other hand, the darkness is so hideous and terrible; as also because the obligations which ly upon us to love, chuse, and prefer the light before darkness, are so weighty and forcible; for Christ earnestly desires it, he graciously counsels it, he strictly commands it, and no less than a whole eternity of glorious and unspeakable happiness depends upon it. O, think of these things!

3. This sin of refusing Christ, is a sin which leaves you without the least colour or excuse, or room of appeal for ever; which must argue it to be a great sin indeed. First, it leaves you without the least colour of excuse; without the least colour of excuse for sin, and without the least colour of excuse why you should not die for sin: This Christ himself is express in, *John xv. 22.* *If I had not come, and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin: If I had not come and spoken to them,* (viz. in the gospel) *revealed my Father's will, and ordering myself and my grace to them; They had not had sin,* i. e. not so great sin: *But now they have no cloak, no excuse for their sin.* Now they have no pretence to make, nothing wherewith to colour or extenuate their sin. The neglect and refusal of Christ, leaves men altogether inexcusable, and it will do so, to be sure, in the last day: O, when God, in the day of his righteous judgment, shall demand of men that have lived under the gospel, why they sin, and have sinned? Why they are found in their sins? And being found in their sins, why they would not die for ever? What will they have to say, by way of excuse or apology for themselves? Verily, nothing; but will be *speechless*, as he is said to be, *Matth. xxii. 12.* They can't say they were not warned of the evil of sin; they can't say that pardon and salvation were not offered to them; they can't say that the offer was not full, and free, and clear; they can't say, they had to do with an hard master; nor can they say, that sin is not worthy of death; they will have nothing to say. *Secondly,* It leaves you without the least room or place of appeal for ever. I may say here, as it is said in another case, *1 Sam. ii. 25.* *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?* So if a man sin against the law, by transgressing of it, he may appeal to the gospel, and the grace of Christ there: But if a man sin against Christ and his grace offered in the gospel, where then

shall he appeal? Verily, there is no appeal to be made, no relief to be found for him. If a man be condemned at the seat of justice, as having sinned against the law, he may appeal unto the mercy-seat, and the throne of grace, and find sweet relief; but if he sin against the mercy-seat, and the throne of grace, then he has nothing to appeal to, that may administer relief to him. Now by refusing of Christ, we sin against the throne of grace; we pull down what in us lies, the mercy-seat; and where then shall we appeal? O, consider these things, and learn by them to dread this sin of refusing Christ. I might say much more to convince you of the hainous evil of it; but let this suffice: Sure I am 'tis enough too; and had we the due sense of it upon our spirits, it would make us tremble at it for ever.

III. Wouldst thou indeed be espoused to Christ? Then give not way to the discouragement of sense, but bear up thy soul upon the encouragements of faith, upon such gospel principles and considerations, as do tend to draw sinners to faith in Christ. Possibly, upon reading and considering the woful misery of thy condition without Christ, and the dreadful hainousness of thy sin and guilt, in thy long and frequent refusing of him, discouragements not a few may arise within; and indeed no sooner usually does a poor soul look towards Christ, to think of closing with him in a marriage-covenant, but presently multitudes of discouragements arise to deter him therefrom. O, says he, what a monstrous sinner am I! How have I despised Christ and his grace! How long have I stood it out against him! I have served my lusts all my days, and rejected his calls. To what purpose do I now talk of closing with him? These, and multitudes of such like discouragements do arise in the soul; which being given way to, do effectually keep him from Christ: But if ever, soul, thou wouldst attain to union and communion with him, thou must shut thine eyes and heart too against all discouragements of this nature; and tho' they press it upon

thee again and again, yet thrust them out, fixing thine eye and heart upon the encouragements of faith; dwell much in the thoughts of them, and bear up thy soul upon such gospel principles and considerations as do tend to weaken unbelief, and beget faith in the soul: And for thy help herein, I shall mention some of these encouragements of faith, or gospel-principles, which I would have thee to be serious and frequent in the contemplation of.

1. The first gospel-principle, or encouragement of faith, which thou shouldest bear up thy soul upon, and be frequent in the contemplation of, is this, that there's a rich, a glorious, and an overflowing fulness of all good treasured up in Christ for poor sinners; and that his grace does abundantly exceed both our wants and sins. 'Tis the work and nature of unbelief, to little and limit the fulness of Christ in the eye of the soul; it shews the soul the multitude of his sins, and wants, but it conceals and locks up Christ's treasure and fulness: And, whatever we pretend, the ground of our not closing with Christ, at least one principle one is this, that we doubt of his fulness, we do not see enough in Christ to supply all our wants, and relieve our distresses: Unbelief persuaded us that Christ is not the Christ the scripture represents him to be. But, soul, away with all such apprehensions, and dwell thou in the contemplation of Christ's infinite fulness: Look to him as one infinitely able to supply thy wants, to pardon thy sins, to heal thy maladies, to subdue thy lusts, to sanctify thy heart, and to save thy soul eternally; look upon him, as the scripture represents him; the scripture tells thee, *That it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19. All fulness of grace and life, all fulness of peace and pardon, all fulness of righteousness and salvation; There is in Christ, not only a fulness of abundance, but of redundancy, and overflowing fulness, a fulness infinitely superabounding our sins and wants. The scripture tells us, *That he is able to save unto the very uttermost, all that come unto God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. Save,

able to save, and save to the uttermost! and that not one or two, but all that come unto God by him. The scripture speaks of Christ's *unsearchable riches*, Ephes. iii. 8. The ocean of his grace is not to be founded by the longest line of the largest created understanding. Paul experienced the super abounding fulness of grace, and has left it upon record for our encouragement; 1 Tim. i. 14. *The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant*: it was more than enough. I found more grace in Christ (as one expresses it) than I knew what to do with all: And yet, what was this Paul? Himself tells you in the verse before and after, he was a *blasphemer, a persecutor, and the chief of sinners*; a man every way of as many sins and wants as thou art. Accordingly view him, and bear up thy soul in the face of all discouragements. Reason thus with thyself; True, my condition is sad, my wants are exceeding many, and my sins exceeding great. But what then? *Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?* Is not Christ able to save me, and that to the utmost, notwithstanding all? Look, O, my soul, yonder is sweet Jesus upon the throne, at his Father's right hand, full of grace and truth; look upon him, and consider: What are all thy wants to his riches and fulness? What are all thy miseries and distresses to his bowels of mercy? What are all thy sins to the merit of his blood? Thy provocations to his sanctification? Were thy wants more and greater than they are, his fulness could supply them all; were thy sins greater and more hainous than they are, his blood could cleanse thee from all; *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. There is infinitely more worth in his merits to pardon and justify thee, and there is evil in thy sins to damn and destroy thee: True, I have a fountain of sin, and guilt, and death in me: But here is a deeper fountain of grace, and life, and righteousness in him. See, O my soul, see how vast and large his treasures of grace and glory are, and bear up thyself upon them. O, did sinners dwell more in the view of the glorious

fulness of Christ, they would be more in love with him; and hereby would counter work and undermine unbelief in one of its greatest artifices, whereby it keeps souls from him. I shall here, for thy encouragement only, subjoin the saying of a worthy divine: "Christ, (says he) can, and it becometh him well to give more than my narrow soul can conceive. If there were ten thousand thousand millions of worlds, and as many heavens full of men and angels, Christ would not be pinched to supply their wants, and to fill them all. Christ is a well of life; but who knoweth how deep it is to the bottom?"

2. The second gospel principle or encouragement of faith which thou shouldest bear up thy soul upon, and be frequent in the contemplation of, is this; That as there are such a glorious and inexhaustible fulness in Christ; so this fulness is in him, not for himself, but to be dispensed and communicated to poor souls coming to him. True (may the soul say) here's fulness enough, riches and treasures enough of all good in Christ: But what's this to me, or wherein does it concern me? Wherein does it concern thee? Why, 'tis wholly thy concern, and the concern of such as thou art; for whatever fulness he has in him, 'tis treasured up in him for souls, for sinners, yea, for the worst of sinners. How sweet is that word, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* where speaking of Christ, the Holy Ghost tells us, *That he had received gifts for men: he hath received gifts, i. e.* He has a fulness of all good in his hand, and at his dispose, and this for men; I, but I am a devil, (says the soul) a rebel, and what's this to me? Observe what follows, and thou wilt find it concerns thee, yea thee especially) *He hath received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also.* Hence also 'tis, that he is said to be made *head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 22.* *He has all fulness dwelling in him,* but 'tis an head, and so 'tis all for the use and service of the body, for every poor soul that comes to him; and therefore 'tis added, *Head over all things to the Church; i. e.* For the churches use and service,

of which he is head. Take a view of all that fulness that is in Christ, and 'tis all as much and as really for the use and service of such as come to him, and are made members of his body, as the treasures and endowments of the natural head are for the use and service of the natural body, and the members thereof. And O, what an encouragement is this to faith? 'Tis the observation of a learned man upon the place last quoted; "Left (says he) we should think this great glory of Christ to be a thing that does not concern us, he is here declared to be constituted and appointed by the Father to be the head of the whole church." Well then, soul, bear up thyself upon this encouragement; say, look, O my soul, look unto sweet Jesus, who have received gifts for men; view him as one that has received a fulness of all grace from the Father, on purpose to be dispensed and communicated to thee, and such as thou art. He has life in him, and he has it for thee; he has peace and pardon in him, and he has it for thee; he has wisdom and righteousness, grace and glory in him, and he has it for thee, and such as thou art; and therefore go to him, expect all from him.

3. The third gospel-principle or encouragement of faith, which thou shouldest bear up thy soul upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this; that there is a perfect freedom and willingness in Christ, yea, 'tis even genuine and natural to him to bestow himself, with all his glorious riches and fulness, upon poor souls coming to him. Christ (as you heard) has all this fulness in him as an head; so you have it expressly, *Col. i. 18. 19.* Now, as 'tis genuine and natural to the head to minister influence to the members; so 'tis even genuine and natural to Christ to communicate his grace to poor souls. Besides all that fulness that is in Christ, 'tis in him not as God only, but as man. 'Tis deposited and treasured up in his human nature: *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. Col. i. 19.* "In him, i. e. (as a learned man expounds it) in the man Christ, or

in that human nature in which he died and transacted the business of our salvation." 'Tis true, the Godhead or divine nature, is the first spring and fountain of all grace; but the human nature of Christ is, as it were, a second spring and fountain of grace, that is, a treasury or storehouse, wherein all grace is laid up for us. Hence 'tis said, *That as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself, because he is the Son of man*, John v. 26, 27. Christ as God, hath life, i. e. all grace originally and independently in him, as the Father hath: Indeed as God, he is the same infinite and independent fountain of life and grace with the Father: But 'tis as man that he is said to have life and grace given to him. The sum then is, that, that glorious fulness of grace that is in Christ for sinners, is fountain'd up in his human nature. And being fountain'd up in his human nature, it will, and can't but flow, yea, overflow too, upon poor souls that cast themselves upon him. The truth is, 'tis to charge Christ with unkindness and unfaithfulness both at once, to suppose him unwilling to communicate himself and his fulness to sinners coming to him. And, soul, canst thou find in thy heart to lay so black a charge upon so sweet and good a Christ? 'Tis the way and work of the devil and unbelief, to persuade souls, that Christ will not receive them, nor communicate his grace and fulness to them, though they should come to him; which they endeavour to do, from the consideration of his greatness and holiness, together with their vileness and sinfulness. Christ, say they, is choice and peculiar in his love and respects, as great persons use to be; he will know his distance, and he will make sinners know theirs; but, soul, deal with this, as from the devil and unbelief; reject it as a reproach thrown upon Christ, and dwell much in the contemplation of his infinite willingness to receive and save the worst of sinners that come to him. Reason it a little with thyself; Why did he become incarnate? Why did he bleed and die? Why does he woo, and

wait, and offer, and call, and strive with poor sinners to win them to himself? Does it not all argue a willingness and readiness in him to give forth, both himself and his fulness to them?

4. The fourth gospel principle, or encouragement of faith, which thou shouldst bear up thy soul upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this; that the only spring and principle of all that ever Christ does for poor sinners, from first to last, is from his own sovereign grace and love. 'Twas his love that brought him down from heaven, and that led him out to bleed and die for them. Hence *Ephes. v. 25.* he is said to *love his church, and give himself for it.* 'Tis his love, his free love, that first draws them to himself, and allures them into covenant with him: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee, Jer. xxxi. 3.* It is his love that receives them, that pardons them, that bestows life and salvation upon them. Hence all is said to be of grace, even the whole of our salvation, *Eph. ii. 8.* Hence he is represented to us as sitting upon a throne of grace, and there 'tis that he invites us to come to him, and from thence gives out all to us, *Heb. iv. 16.* and therefore to that throne we, though sinners, may come boldly: He is upon a throne; and therefore we may assure ourselves that he will do great things for sinners coming to him: He will act like a king, pardon like a king, save like a king; do all with kingly greatness and magnificence. And it is a throne of grace, a throne that reigns grace, a throne whereon grace sits in imperial majesty, and decrees all for poor sinners coming to it; and so does all freely, all in a way of sovereign grace and love: Hence that language, *I will have mercy, because I will have mercy; I will pardon, because I will pardon; I will save, because I will save.* Now, what an encouragement is this to faith; and how if rightly weighed and considered, would it dash all the pleas of unbelief to pieces, and sweetly draw the soul on to a close with Christ in a marriage covenant? For pray

consider, what is the nature of a sovereign grace and love? The nature of it, is to act from itself to itself, without any consideration of any thing in us, without respecting either the worthiness, or the unworthiness of the creature at all. The nature of it is such, that 'tis neither constrained to, nor restrained from doing good to souls, by any thing either of good or evil in them; but all runs freely: And therefore no matter what I am, though never so vile and wretched in myself, while I have to do with such love; and such love is the spring of all Christ's dealings with me, and carriages towards me.

5. The fifth gospel principle, or encouragement of faith, which thou shouldst bear up thyself upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That the great design of Christ in all his undertaking for, and dispensation towards sinners, is the illustrating and enthroning of his own grace; and the more vile, sinful, and forlorn a wretch thou art, the more will his grace be enthroned and illustrated in thine acceptance with him. Christ in his dealings with, and for sinners, does not only act from a principle of sovereign grace, but in all he carries on a design to enthrone that grace of his and to make it glorious for ever; yea, and he acts, and will act suitably to such a design. 'Tis not what such and such sinners do, or do not deserve, (says Christ) that I am to mind, but what my grace can do for them, and what will make most for the glory of that grace, which will set the brightest crown upon its head: This is evident, *Ephes. i. 6. 12. 14.* which was opened before upon another occasion; hence those whom he saves, in such a way, as may most lift up his own grace, his design therein being *that grace might reign*, as you have it, *Rom. v. 21.* Hence you read of his *justifying the ungodly*, *Rom. iv. 5.* He will have his grace triumph on every soul whom he saves. Now what an encouragement is this to faith? Christ not only sits upon a throne of grace, but also his design in dealing with

face upon the throne. Sinner; *2 Cor. viii. 23* al thou art, the more suitable
 the *also* are his gl a to save thee; for, the more
 it is to cause they do art, the greater name and glory
 sinful and cause he thine acceptance and salvation by
 will his grace on the him: The more vile and sinful thou art, the greater
 will be the declaration of grace on Christ's part in thine
 acceptance and avation. O, when Christ shall pardon
 a soul so guilty, receive a soul so sinful, reconcile a soul
 that is such an enemy as thou art; how will this declare
 the glorious riches of his grace, in the view both of
 men and angels? This will *show forth the exceeding riches*
of his grace, as the expression is, *Ephes. ii. 7*. And the
 more vile and sinful thou art, the greater will be the
 admiration of grace for ever on thy part: Where much
 is forgiven, there will be the return of much love, much
 praise, *Luke vii. 47*. O, who am I (says the soul, when
 once received to mercy, though more than ordinary
 vile and sinful) who am I, that I should find grace in
 Christ's sight? What, such a rebel, and yet pardon-
 ed? Such an enemy, and yet reconciled? Such a black
 devil, and yet wash'd, and made white in the blood
 of the Lamb? Such a fiend of hell, and yet made a
 favourite of heaven? Such a filthy deformed wretch,
 and yet taken into the pure and lovely bosom of sweet
 Jesus? O grace, grace! How rich and free is grace?
 and O what praise and *Hallelujahs* will there be tuned
 upon the tongues and spirits of such to God and the
 Lamb for ever? When therefore thou wouldst go to
 Christ, and discouragements arise to keep thee back
 from him, thou shouldst dwell in the thoughts of,
 and bear up thy soul upon this consideration, reason-
 ing thus with thyself; True, I am a vile wretch, the
 chief of sinners, one on all accounts worthy to be ab-
 horred, and cast off by Christ: But what then? Christ
 acts towards sinners, purely from a principle of grace
 and love; he regards neither worthiness, nor un-
 worthiness; whether a great sinner or a little sinner,
 'tis all one to him, as to his accepting of me. More-
 over, his design is to crown his grace, and render

The Best Man sovereign grace and that glorious; and the more from itself to itself, for that design of his, will take in thing in us, with and salvation: How vile therefore self, or the unwell cast myself upon him, and put in for a new nature with him.

6. The sixth gospel-principle, 6, nor management of faith, which thou shouldst bear eith myself upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That is the glory and perfection of our spirit, as mediator, to receive sinners, and to give out himself and his fulness to them, when they come to him. This, if rightly weighed, will mightily help on faith, and lift the poor soul over his discouragements, into the bosom and embraces of Jesus Christ. To understand it aright, you must know, that Christ has a two-fold glory and perfection; the glory and perfection of his person, as he is the Son of God; and the glory and perfection of his office, as he is mediator and head of the second covenant. The glory and perfection of his person as the Son of God, that is infinitely complete and full, that admits neither of diminution nor augmentation, being unchangeably the same for ever. But the glory and perfection of his office, as mediator, that in a great measure arises from his receiving sinners, and bestowing himself and his grace upon them when they come to him; and the more sinners he receives, and the more grace he gives out to them, the greater his glory and perfection in this respect is: And it may be truly said, that Christ, in receiving and giving out grace to sinners when they come to him, does increase the revenue of his own glory, and more and more complete and perfect himself as head and mediator; hence the church is called *his fulness*, Eph. i. 3. *God gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* Now, if the church is Christ's fulness, then the more that is filled and completed by his receiving sinners to himself, and giving out grace to them; the more full and complete he himself, as to his mediatory honour and perfection, grows: Hence also saints are said to be *the glory of*

Christ, 2 Cor. viii. 23. As Christ alone is their glory, so they also are his glory: And how his glory? Not only because they do, or should actually glorify him, but also because he has received them, and laid out his grace upon them, and it is his grace only that shines forth in them. Hence that observation of *Calvin* upon the place, "They (says he) that excel most in grace and holiness, they peculiarly are the glory of Christ; because they have nothing but by free gift from Christ." Hence also Christ tells us, that *he is glorified in them*, John xviii. 10. And he says expressly, *That the spirit shall glorify him, because he shall receive of his and give it unto us*, John xvi. 14. By all which it appears, that 'tis the glory and perfection of Christ as mediator, to receive sinners coming to him, and to bestow himself and his grace upon them. In short, my beloved, all that ever Christ has done for, and is made of God to poor sinners; all his acts, and all his offices, as mediator; do receive their ultimate perfection in their full influences on us and our salvation. And as Christ receives his name and denomination of a Saviour, from his relation to, and acting for poor sinners to redeem and save them; so the perfection of this office, and those acts of his, do ly in the full accomplishment of our salvation: And indeed, they would all be but vain and weak acts, should he not fully save us coming to him. O what encouragement is here to faith, and how must unbelief sink and die before this consideration, if rightly improved! True, (may the soul say) I am vile, sinful, and unworthy, but 'tis the honour of Christ, to receive me; 'tis his glory to bestow himself and his grace upon me; 'tis his perfection, as a mediator, to accept and save me, and such as I am; and therefore why should I be discouraged? I will go to him, and cast myself upon him. Thus bear up your souls upon, and encourage your faith with those gospel-principles, which is greatly necessary, and will not a little conduce to an espousal between Christ and you.

IV. Wouldst thou indeed be espoused to Christ? Then take heed of all jealousies of him, and prejudices against him; and be sure ever to maintain right thoughts of him. One of the great dangers of Satan, and one of the most cursed workings of unbelief, is to prejudice souls against Christ, and to fill them with hard, jealous thoughts of him; which if they can prevail in, they infallibly keep the soul from closing with him in a marriage-covenant. If a woman has jealousies and hard thoughts of a man, and be filled with prejudices against him, she is never like to enter into a marriage-covenant with him. And no more will a soul close with Christ in a marriage-covenant, as long as he is filled with hard thoughts of him, and prejudices against him: Watch therefore against this. The devil together with the unbelief of our own hearts, will frame up a thousand strange notions and representations of Christ in the soul, thereby to prejudice us against Christ; but take heed of all these, and be sure to maintain right thoughts and apprehensions of him. Particularly here take only two things.

1. Be sure to maintain honourable thoughts of his person: Look upon him as a person of glory, and as having all excellencies in him. 'Tis the work and nature of unbelief to darken and obscure the Person of Christ, to make that appear vile and contemptible in the eye of the soul, whereby it does effectually strengthen itself within him; and indeed there is nothing more prevalent to keep the soul from Christ than an ignorance of, or prejudice against his personal worth and excellencies. This was that which make the *Jews* so generally reject him: *They saw no beauty in him for which they should desire him, nor did they discern form or comeliness in him*: and therefore reject him, *Isa. liii. 1, 2.* - They look'd no further than the outward form, the veil of his flesh; they saw not his divine beauty and glory, and so despised him. And, my beloved, unless we look within this veil, and come to view and contemplate him as a person of glory, we also shall reject him to our eternal

perdition. Pray observe, 'tis the person of Christ that puts worth and virtue in all his doings, and all his sufferings; all his offices, and all his promises: 'Tis the worth and excellency of his person that make his blood so precious, his promises so sweet, his righteousness so glorious, his grace so efficacious, his love so endearing: 'Tis the worth and excellency of his person, that gives authority to all the commands of faith, and does awe the heart obedience; and 'tis the worth and excellency of his person that is one of the most powerful attractives to draw and allure the hearts of the sons of men to him; if therefore his person be undervalued, if the dignity and glory of that be not seen, we are never like to enter into a marriage-covenant with him. Therefore, soul, if ever thou wouldest be espoused to this Christ, always maintain honourable thoughts of his person; *Behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father,* and beg him more and more to reveal his personal worth, and excellencies to thee.

2. Be sure always to maintain good thoughts of his ways, kingdom and government: admit not of one jealousy of Christ, as if he were an hard, severe husband; as if he carried it with rigour, and severity towards his spouses: If the devil and unbelief fail in their other attempts, then they endeavour to prejudice souls against Christ, persuading them that he is an hard matter, an austere husband, that rules with intolerable rigour and severity: I know, says he in the gospel, *that thou wast an austere man*, Matth. xxv. 24. And hereby the soul is scared off from Christ. But, soul, as ever thou wouldest be espoused to him, take heed of any such jealousy of him, or prejudice against him, keeping up good thoughts of him and his ways; him and his government; and be much in contemplating the sweetness both of him and his ways. Is he severe? Pray where lies his severity? Does he call you to bear his yoke? He does, but 'tis an easy yoke: Does he enjoin you to bear his burden? He does, but 'tis a light burden; *My yoke is easy, and*

my burden is light, Matth. xii. 29, 30. Does he expect you should take up the cross? He does, but it is a sweet cross, a gainful cross, an honourable cross, a cross that is inlaid with love, and overlaid with divine sweetness; a cross that has a crown annexed to it, even a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10. A cross that is a crown here; for 'tis an honour to suffer for Christ, Acts v. 41. And a cross that will greaten and brighten thine *our crown* hereafter, Matth. v. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you; for great is your reward in heaven.* Does he call you to perform such and such services? He does, but withal he gives you strength to perform them, *helping your infirmities by his good spirit*, Rom. viii. 26, and in case you fail, and come short in and of what he calls for; what then? Why then, he *pities and spares you, as a father does his son that serveth him*; he overlooks your failings and defects, Mal. iii. 17. Can you do nothing, only you have a mind to serve him? Why then, he *accepts of that willing mind according to what you have, and not according to what you have not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12. When you can't pour out a pray'r, a sigh, a groan is accepted by him. Will he have the throne in you, and rule in your souls? He will; but this way of rule is most sweet; for he rules with love, and he rewards with life; and he gives a throne for a throne, a throne in glory for a throne in your souls; What shall I say? *His ways are all ways of pleasantness, and his paths are all peace*, Prov. iii. 17. And O, what pleasure, what delight, what solace and satisfaction of soul is there to be found in walking in them? In a word, his whole service is perfect freedom, and there is no true freedom but in his ways and service. 'Tis a great saying, which I have read in one of the ancients, "Who (says he) would not reign? But wouldst thou reign happily? Serve kind Jesus and thou shalt reign, because to serve him is true reigning." Thus you see, there's no just reason for hard thoughts of Christ in this respect, but rather the contrary: Accordingly answer, and throw off all these

black reproaches, which the devil and unbelief casts upon this good Lord ; and be sure to maintain good thoughts of him, and his ways, which will not a little conduce to the promoting of an espousal between him and thee.

V. Would thou indeed be espoused to Christ? Then study and contemplate much how infinitely grateful and acceptable Christ is ; sinners know not, or if they know, they consider not, who, or what Christ is ; they mind not how acceptable a good he is to souls, and therefore they slight him ; *Hadst thou known* says Christ to the woman, *the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldst have asked him, and he would have given thee living water,* John iv. 10. Truly, did men know Christ and his infinite acceptableness, they would run to him, and close with him in a marriage covenant. Study therefore and contemplate this much, thereby possessing thy soul with a deep sense of it. The apostle speaking but of one truth concerning Christ, tells us, it is *worthy of all acceptation*, 1 Tim. i. 16. And if so, what acceptation must Christ himself, yea Christ, with all his truths, and all his treasures both, be worthy of? And how should our souls cleave to him, and take him into our embraces? There are, among others, five things which speak a good to be eminently grateful and acceptable, worth and excellency, usefulness and serviceableness, suitableness and conveniency, sweetness and delight, durableness and unchangeableness in all ; all which are found in Christ, who tenders himself and his love to us.

1. There is worth and excellency in Christ, yea, incomparable worth and excellency. The apostle speaks of an excelling excellency that there is in the knowledge of Christ, *Phil. iii. 8*. Now the knowledge of Christ is so excellent, because Christ is excellent, Christ indeed is all worth, all excellency ; he is an infinite ocean of beauty and glory ; *he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,* Cant. v. 10, 16. All excellency dwell in him, as in their proper

fountain; and they all meet and are united in him, as lines in their proper centre, Some beauty, some excellencies you find scattered up and down among the creatures, the saints and the angels, the sun, moon, and stars, and the like; But alas! 'tis scattered, and 'tis scattered but here and there a drop; but in Christ you have all beauty, all worth, all excellency in a blessed union and conjunction; you have all in one, and that unchangeably. O what a portion is Christ (says one) O, that the saints would dig deeper in the treasures of his wisdom and excellencies. Truly 'tis sweet digging there; and there, in some sort, there will be room for digging to all eternity; for even through eternity new wonders of glory will arise, new beauties and excellencies will appear, and shine forth in Christ. What shall I say? He has in him all the excellencies of both worlds; and is indeed deservedly the wonder of both; In him there is a confluence of all the lovely properties, the drawing attributes, the ravishing beauties, the bright shining; and glorious perfections of the infinitely blessed Deity. Hence, says he, *all that the Father hath is mine*; which may be understood of his divine perfections, *John xvi. 15.* Hence also he is said to be *equal with God*, *Phil. ii. 6. i. e.* *Look, whatever divine perfections there are in God the Father, they all are found in Christ; In him is express the whole person of the Father, the whole essence, being, beauty of the Father: And (as a learned man has observed) "Christ the Son is in all things like the Father; this only excepted, that he is not the person of the Father."* Hence also he is said to be *the brightness of his Father's glory, as the express image of his person*, *Heb. i. 3.* All the Father's glories and excellencies do shine forth in him; and he perfectly represents the Father to us. Thus Christ is a person of excellency; and so most acceptable. And O, who would not accept and embrace such a Christ? And how great a wickedness is it to reject him? I can't but here take up the complaint of an holy man: O pity, pity for evermore (says he)

that there should be such an one as Christ Jesus, so boundless, so bottomless, so incomparable, so infinite in excellency and sweetness, and so few that will take him; they miserably lose their love (says he) who will not bestow it upon this lovely one."

2. There is usefulness and serviceableness in Christ. As Christ is a person of the highest excellency, so of the greatest and most absolute need, use and service to poor souls; indeed he is *the one needful good*, Luke x. 42. Christ is so much needed by, and of so much use and service to poor souls, that they can't possibly do well and be happy without him. Pray consider, we provoke God, and he is angry with us; and by Christ alone 'tis, that we *receive the atonement*, Rom. v. 11. We sin, and load ourselves with guilt; and by Christ alone 'tis that we are or can be discharged from it; *In him have we redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Eph. i. 7. We have an hard and impenitent heart, an heart that cannot repent; and by Christ; and Christ alone 'tis that we can obtain repentance, *he being exalted to give repentance unto Israel, as well as remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. We are at a dreadful distance from God; *as far off* (as the scripture speaks) and by Christ and him alone 'tis, that *we are made nigh*. What shall I say? The best of saints as well as the worst of sinners have an absolute need of Christ, and he is of daily use and service to them; neither can they live one day, or one hour without him; indeed he is their life, and without him they therefore are dead and undone, as well as others: *without him they can do nothing*, John xv. 5. Without him, every duty will be too hard, every burthen will be too heavy, every temptation will be too strong, every lust will be too mighty for them; without him, they should yet fall short of the eternal rest, and would make shipwreck of faith, souls, and all for ever. Without him, neither saints nor sinners can have any access to God, any intercourse or communion with him, in which notwithstanding, the whole of our happiness, both

in time and eternity, lies. *I am the way* (says he) *and no man cometh to the Father but by me*, John xiv. 6. *And through him*, says the Apostle, *we have access unto the Father, by one spirit*, Eph. ii. 18. Without him, we could have no peace with God; *for he alone is our peace*, Eph. ii. 14. And having peace with God, without him we could not maintain our peace one hour, it being he alone that is our *advocate and propitiation with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1, 2. Thus he is every way most needful, and most useful to eternal souls, O how grateful, how acceptable then is he, and ought he to be to us!

3. There is suitability and conveniency also in Christ to the souls of men: The suitability and conveniency of any good renders it acceptable to us. How acceptable is bread to an hungry man, because a good suitable to him? How acceptable is drink to a thirsty man, because a good suitable to him? Now there is an admirable suitability and conveniency in Christ to the souls of men, and that in all the cases of them: Why then should he not be acceptable to them? One (I remember) represents the suitability of Christ to the souls and wants of sinners thus; the whole person, nature, and offices of Christ (says he) are so suited and proportioned to all the variety of needs in us, that they are as a key for a lock, there is ward for ward, every thing done in the key suitable to the lock: And indeed so 'tis here, Christ and his fulness being exactly suitable to us and our wants, We are sick, and sick to death; and Christ is a physician, *Matth. ix. 12*. And what more suitable to the sick than a physician? We are sinful and sinful to damnation; we are lost sinners, and Christ is a Saviour; and who, or what more suitable to lost sinners than a Saviour? We are poor captives, the captives of sin and Satan, in bondage to death and the curse; and Christ is a Redeemer; and who or what more suitable to captives than a Redeemer? We are under the tyranny and usurpation of many mighty powerful lusts, lusts that are imposing upon us every

hour ; and we are no ways able to deal with them. But Christ is a great and puissant king, who can subdue all, and whose arrows shall be sharp in the hearts of all his and our enemies : and what more suitable to persons in such a circumstance than such a king ? We are dead, and Christ is life ; and what more suitable for the dead than life ? We are poor and miserable, and Christ is gold to enrich us. Are we naked ? Christ is cloathing for us. Are we blind ? He is eye-salve for us : Are we in prison ? He is liberty : Are we hungry ? He is bread : Are we thirsty ? He is the water of life, which those that drink of, shall never thirst : Are we troubled ? He is rest : Are we drooping and disponding ? He is the consolation of *Israel* : Are we bewilder'd ? He is a guide : Are we born down in our spiritual conflicts ? He is the captain of our salvation, who will fight for us. O, how suitable every way is Christ to souls ; and being so suitable, why should he not be acceptable to us. Poor sinner ! is there any in heaven or earth, that will so suit and answer the various wants and cases of thy soul, as Christ does and will ? Why then shouldest thou not account him worthy of all acceptance ?

4. There is a sweetness and delight in Christ : *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*, (says the Poet) every one is drawn and allur'd by pleasure and delight. What is it that makes sin, that cursed thing sin, pleasing and grateful to so many ? Surely one great thing is that pleasure and delight which they find, at least promise themselves to find in it. And indeed generally, the more sweet and delightful things are, the more readily and greedily they are embraced by the sons of men : Why then should not Christ be grateful and acceptable to us ? Is there any so sweet, so pleasant, so delightful as he ? He is a fountain of sweetness, as well as excellency. " I find him so sweet (says an holy man, speaking of Christ) that my love, suppose I would charge it to remove from him, it would not obey me." How sweet is his

love! *Thy love is better than wine*, says the spouse, Cant. i. 2. *This is that best wine which goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak*, Cant. vii. 9. Yea, this is that will cause a dead man to speak and live, as an holy man speaks concerning it. Experienced souls will tell you, that there is more sweetness in one descent of love from Christ, than in all the delights of sin and the creature. This is that which sweetens the sharpest affliction; yea, this is that, and that alone, which sweetens death itself, and enables the soul truly to triumph over, Rom. viii. 39. O the sweet bathing that there is in the fountain of Christ's love! how sweet are his fruits? *I sat down under his shadow*, says the spouse, *with great delight, and his fruits were sweet to my taste*, Cant. ii. 3. By fruits, I understand the purchase of his blood, and the effects of his love, peace, pardon, righteousness, justification, sanctification, and holiness, acceptance with God, and the like. And O how sweet are these! How pleasant are these! With what solace and satisfaction may a believing soul feed and feast himself upon these! How sweet is his presence, intercourse, and communion with him! This made the spouse to *be glad and rejoice in him*, Cant. i. 4. This indeed sets the soul down at the very gate of heaven, where he says, 'tis good to be here. 'Tis a blessed exclamation which I find one of the ancients break out into; "O how good, and how sweet! O how good and how pleasant is it, to dwell with thee, most sweet Jesus; to converse with thee, to reveal the concerns of our souls to thee, and to enjoy thy consolations! And again elsewhere, O thou most sweet and most loving Jesus, how sweet is it to think of thee! for while we are speaking and thinking of thee, thou art sweetly present with us, and our souls are filled with delight in the odours of thine ointments. And yet once more; O Lord, when at any time I partake in this joy, (speaking of the joy of communion with him) I cry'd out, Lord, 'tis good to be here; let us build three tabernacles here, one for faith, one for hope, one for

love." And indeed who is there that knows what communion with Christ means, that does not find an incomparable sweetness, solace and satisfaction in it? This is that which fills some with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even here; and this is that which will be the joy and delight of heaven for ever: Every way Christ is a very field of pleasure, a very paradise of joy, and a very fountain of delight: O why, why then should he not be more graceful and acceptable to us?

5. There is durableness and unchangeableness in Christ; which being added to all the former, renders him even infinitely the more grateful and acceptable possibly some worth, some suitableness, some sweetness and delight there may be found in the creature, and creature-enjoyments; but alas, this allays the acceptableness of all, that 'tis fading, dying, and changing; And indeed, whatever is short, and but for a season, can't challenge any great acceptation. But now, Christ he is lasting, durable, and unchangeable; *He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. What he was, he is, and what he is, he always will be; he was most excellent, most useful, most suitable, most sweet and delightful to souls; and so he is, and always will be. "He (as one of the ancients speaks of him) is immutable, he changes all things, but is himself unchangeable, never new, never old. Hence also Christ himself tells us, *That he is the Alpha and Omega, he that was, and is, and is to come*, Rev. i. 8. He is ever the same in love, in beauty, in fulness, in faithfulness, and in all his desirableness. And O, how grateful and acceptable does this render him! All our enjoyments here below fade and change; yea, we ourselves change; *Changes and war are upon us*, as *Job* speaks, yea, some of us are daily waiting for our last and great change: But O! blessed be God, Christ fades not, Christ changes not: What he was to, and what he has done for souls formerly, that he is to and that he can do for souls now; yea, and

that he will be to, and will be able to do for souls hereafter: for he is still to come; as he was and is, so is to come, which is a sweet word. Poor soul, hitherto it may be thou hast gone along through thy work and warfare with some comfort and courage; but that which damps and terrifies thee, is the apprehension of what may be to come. O, sayest thou, the trials that are to come, the difficulties that are to come, the temptations that are to come, the storms and tempests that are to come! well soul, for thy encouragement under all, know, that whatever is to come, Christ is to come too. Are there trials to come? Christ is to come too: Are there difficulties and temptations to come? Christ is to come too: Are there storms and tempests to come? Christ is to come too: And while Christ is to come, fear not, only close with him in a marriage covenant, and make him thine; then come what will come, come what can come, and all will be well. Thus Christ is every way acceptable, and infinitely acceptable; and as ever, soul, thou wouldst be indeed espoused to him, dwell much in the study and contemplation of his acceptableness; labour to be possess'd with a deep and daily renewed sense of it, which will sweetly draw and allure thy soul to him.

VI. Wouldst thou indeed be espoused to Christ? then be sure that thou pitchest thy faith aright upon him, and closest ineffectually with him in a way of believing. 'Tis faith that is both the great uniting, and the great interesting grace; it unites us to Christ and interests us in Christ: 'Tis that, as has been formerly declared and evinced, that puts Christ and the soul into the bosom and embraces of each others love, and by which the marriage knot is tied between them. If ever therefore thou wouldst be indeed espoused unto him, look well to thy faith, see that thou dost pitch that aright upon him, closing with him, and embracing of him; not by halves, but thoroughly; not feignedly, but intimately and cordially. But here some may say, how may we do

to pitch our faith aright upon Christ, so as to get conjugal-union and communion with him? Three things must be done in order hereunto, which I desire you to look well to.

I. See that you wholly quit and renounce yourselves.

II. Labour to get a right notion and apprehension of Christ,

III. Be sure to make a right choice of him, being so apprehended.

I. Would you pitch your faith aright upon Christ, and be indeed espoused to him? Then see that you wholly quit and renounce yourselves: Self and believing are at the utmost distance from, and enmity with each other that is imaginable; they are irreconcilably opposite to each other; and where faith takes place, there self vanishes and dies away, and that in all its notions, and with all its accomplishments. Hence, says Christ, *If any man will come after me, believe on me, be espoused to me, let him deny himself*, Matth. xvi. 24. *Let him deny himself*, renounce himself, go out of himself, let self become nothing with him. And indeed, the soul that believes on Christ, does go quite out of himself, he sees and feels himself to be a poor empty nothing in all respects; he sees and finds his strength to be weakness; his wisdom, folly; his beauty, blackness; his righteousness, sin; his all, nothing; and thus must we, if ever we indeed believe and get union with Christ. O my beloved, one of the great things which stands between faith and us, Christ and us, is self: This indeed is the soul's darling, the first born (as one calls it) of his love and delights, and he is loath to part with it; but part with it he must, and renounce it he must, or he can never believe it aright, nor is he ever like to have any part or lot in Christ; every step out of self is a step towards Christ, and faith in Christ; and we must be divorced from the one, if ever we be married to the other; particularly, you must quit and renounce self, especially in this three-fold notion; self-will, self-worth, self-interest.

1. You must quit and renounce self-will. He that indeed believes, must in a sort have no will of his own, but his will must be wholly melted or resigned up into the will of Christ: Hence the church is said to be *subject unto Christ*, Eph. v. 24. We are apt to live in our own wills, and are exceeding fond of, and set upon having our wills, and that how cross and contrary soever they be to the will of Christ: But if ever we believe so as to get union with Christ, our stubborn wills must bow, our proud wills must down, and must in all things, as much as is possible, be referred and resigned into Christ's will: and good reason, for his will is the rule of goodness, as well as the first cause of all things: we must not think to say we are lords, but we must bow to Christ as the great and only Lord.

2. You must quit and renounce self-worth, self-righteousness, you must renounce all worth and righteousness of your own, in point of justification and acceptance with God. 'Tis a great word which I shall speak, Mens duties, living under the gospel, keep almost as many from Christ and believing, as their sins do: my meaning is, as the love of sins keep some, so confidence in duties, a confidence in self-worth, self-righteousness, keeps multitudes of others from Christ and believing: And the truth is, my beloved, this piece of self is the great idol of the soul, and that which men are marvellously loath to quit and renounce; and indeed 'tis oftentimes so painted, and, as it were so spiritualiz'd, acted with so much state, and set out with so many ornaments, that it would make any one in love with it. But yet this idol, so dear as it is to the soul, must be denied and renounced; this darling must be cast off and that with loathing and abomination in respect of soul saving, if ever you believe, and are united to Christ. And the soul that indeed does believe, looks upon himself to be the poorest, despicablest, and undonest creature in the world notwithstanding all; he throws away, not only his rags, but his robes too; all his

privileges, all his performances, all his moral excellencies and attainments, as to a dependance upon them for life and salvation; as you know *Paul* did, *Phil.* iii. 8, 9. of which more hereafter. The soul's language in the work of believing, is such as this; I am a poor, vile, empty nothing in myself; I am nothing, I can do nothing, and I deserve nothing; I am nothing but sin, I can do nothing but offend and provoke God, and I deserve nothing but frowns and death from him. If ever I be saved, 'tis free grace must save me; if ever I find favour in God's sight, it must be purely from grace in Christ. Alas! I have walked contrary to God all my days; my heart and life both have been full of enmity and provocation against him, and my very duties are damning, *my best righteousness being as filthy rags*, *Isa.* lxiv. 6. And indeed, till it comes to this with us, we are like to remain strangers to Christ, and faith in Christ. I shall only say this further as to this particular, that no men in the world are farther off from Christ, and union with him through believing, than such as trust in their own worth, in their own righteousness. Christ himself tells us, that *Publicans and harlots do enter the kingdom of heaven before such*. *Matth.* xxi. 31.

3. You must quit and renounce self interest; that is to say, you must be at a parting point with all, you must be willing to forgo all your outward interelsts and concerns for Christ, when he calls you to it, thinking nothing too much or too good for him: This Christ is express in *Matth.* x. 37. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* And again, *Luke* xiv. 33. *Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*. In a word, the meaning is not, that all that come to Christ, must actually forsake all those things, and deny themselves as to the enjoyment of them. But the meaning is, (first) that we must have a very diminutive love for these in comparison of Christ. And (secondly) that we must be at a

parting point with all for Christ's sake, and at Christ's call. And truly, 'tis but reason we should be so; he that actually parted with so much for us, does highly deserve that we should be in a readiness to part with our little all for him. Thus we must wholly quit and renounce ourselves, if we would indeed believe and have union with Christ.

II. Would you pitch your faith aright upon Christ, and be indeed espoused to him? then labour to get a right notion and apprehension of him, as the great object of faith. One great reason why many fall and miscarry in their faith, and so fall short of Christ, is their ignorance of him; they have not a right notion and apprehension of Christ, as the great object of faith; and indeed, unless Christ be rightly known and apprehended by us, we are never like to pitch our faith aright upon him: *How shall they believe* (says the apostle) *in him, of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14. *How shall they believe?* i. e. men cannot believe aright on one that has not been revealed and made known to them: a blind, ignorant faith is ever like to reach union and communion with Christ; and, my beloved, if we would believe aright on Christ, we must know him aright and apprehend him aright. Faith, in scripture is sometimes express'd by knowledge, *John xvii. 3.* not that knowledge alone is all that is requisite to faith, but it notes thus much to us, that the knowledge of Christ is such a requisite to believing, that there can be no true believing without it. Hence also Christ speaks of *seeing the Son, and believing on him*; seeing before believing, and seeing in order to believing; *This is the will of him that sent me, that whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, John vi. 40.* By *seeing the Son*, here we are to understand the true knowledge of Christ. Hence also they that come to Christ, and believe savingly on him, are said, in order thereunto, *to be taught of God, and to have heard and learned of the Father, John vi. 45.* And pray, what have they been taught of God? what have they learn'd of him,

but the knowledge of Christ as the great object of faith? at least this is one great lesson, which all that believe, do and must learn. As ever therefore you would pitch your faith aright upon Christ, labour to know and apprehend him aright; labour to know and apprehend him as he is revealed and offered in the gospel, particularly,

1. View and apprehend him in his Godhead and divine nature. The gospel reveals him in his divinity, it propounds him to our faith, as God, *the true God, the great God, the mighty God, God over all.* And thus should faith eye and apprehend him; thus *Thomas* his faith apprehended him, when he said, *my Lord, and my God,* John xx. 28. And indeed nothing but a Godhead, and infinite, eternal, unchangeable Godhead, is a foundation strong enough for faith to build upon.

2. View and apprehend him in his personal relation; not only as God, but also as God the Son, and so as distinguish'd from the Father. Thus the gospel reveals and propounds him to our faith; and thus also should our faith view and apprehend him. Thus *Peter's* faith, with the rest in whose name he spake, did eye and apprehend him; John vi. 69. *We believe and are sure (said he) that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* There is a distinct honour due to every person in the sacred Trinity; and the more distinctly our faith eyes and apprehends Christ in his personal relation, as Son, the more complete it is, and the more it gives him the honour of that relation.

3. View and apprehend him in his humanity, or as the Son of God incarnate. The gospel reveals and propounds Christ as the object of faith to us; not simply and God, as God the Son, but as God the Son incarnate, as *the word made flesh,* John i. 14. or, as *God manifested in the flesh,* 1 Tim. iii. 16. As having taken human nature into personal union with himself, and so is both God and man in one person; and thus also should faith eye and apprehend him: *You believe God,* says he, *believe also in me,* John i. 14. Hence

also he speaks so often of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*; and of *giving his flesh for the life of the world*: And withal tells us, *that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed*, John vi. 51, 53, 54, 55, 56. by all which he signifies to us, that our faith must respect and apprehend him as man, as well as God; as the Son incarnate; and indeed thus he is the next and most immediate object of faith. The Godhead or divinity, is the ultimate object of faith; but Christ, the Son incarnate, is the next and most immediate object of faith: Hence we are said *by him to believe in God*, 1 Pet. i. 21. Faith first eyes Christ as man, or the Son incarnate, and by him comes ultimately to object itself upon God. The humanity is *janua ad divinitatem*, as one speaks of it) a gate to the divinity, that by which our faith passes to the Godhead. "And (as a great divine speaks) he that comes not to Christ as man shall never come to him as God." The truth is, faith cannot deal with God immediately, but as God clothed with our nature.

4. View and apprehend him in his office of mediatorsnip. The gospel reveals and propounds Christ to our faith in his office, it propounds and reveals him as Christ, as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as one *seal'd, sent, and anointed by the Father* for the redemption of lost souls: and thus also should faith eye and apprehend him. So also did *Peter's faith* apprehend him: *Thou art Christ* (says he) *the Son of the living God*, Matth. xvi. 16. Hence we read of *believing that Jesus is the Christ*, 1 John v. 1. Hence also Christ tells the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*, John viii. 24. *If he believe not that I am he*, i. e. that I am the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour that was promised. O! faith is short of that notion it should have of Christ, unless it thus eyes him in his office.

5. View and apprehend him in his infinite ability and sufficiency for the discharge of his office. The gospel reveals and propounds him to our faith, as *one able to save to the very uttermost*; and accordingly

should our faith eye and apprehend him, *Heb. vii.* It reveals him indeed both as an only and all sufficient Saviour: As an only Saviour; *Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none besides me, Isa. xlv. 22.* Neither is there salvation in any other; nor is there any other name given under heaven, whereby we may be saved but his only, *Acts xiv. 12.* And as an all sufficient Saviour; *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, (says he) and he that eateth me, even he shall live by me, John vi. 55.* It reveals him in the infinite virtue of his blood, the inexhaustible fulness of his grace, the compleatness of his obedience, the excellency of his righteousness, the perfection of his satisfaction, and the like; and thus should our faith eye and apprehend him: O, labour for such a notion and apprehension of Christ as this is; as ever you would believe aright, and be indeed espoused to Christ, labour for a sound, clear, distinct knowledge of him, as the great object of faith: Pray much for a *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*; that was the Apostle's prayer for the *Ephesians* in this case *Eph. i. 7.* and let it be yours for yourselves.

III. Would you pitch your faith aright upon Christ, and be indeed espoused to him? Then be sure to make a right choice or election of him, being thus known and apprehended. To have a right notion and apprehension of Christ, is good and necessary, in order to union with him by believing, but 'tis not enough; know Christ being known and apprehended, must also be chosen and embraced by us, and that as he is revealed and offered in the gospel. To know and apprehend Christ, is an act of the mind or understanding; but to chuse and embrace Christ, is an act of the will and affections; and tho' faith has its rise and inchoation in the mind, yet its compliment and perfection it has in the will and affections; these liking chusing and embracing of him, and that in a way suitable to what the mind sees and apprehends concerning him; and this must be added to the for-

over, or there is no right believing, and so no conjugal union and communion with Christ: Hence that of the apostle, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. True believing then is worth the heart, now by the heart here, as also generally elsewhere in scripture, is meant the will and affections; accordingly to believe with the heart, is for the will and affections to chuse and embrace Christ, as he is revealed and offered in the gospel; this is called a *receiving of Christ*, John i. 12. We receive Christ into our wills, when we chuse him and adhere to him for life and salvation; we receive him unto our affections, when we love him, desire him, and delight in him; and this is believing. "To believe, (says Calvin) is nothing else but to chuse and embrace Christ with a sincere affection of mind, as he is reveal'd and offer'd in the gospel; and this indeed is the great vital act of faith, and that whereby our conjugal union and communion with Christ is more especially brought about: This is that which makes Christ ours, and puts us into the possession of him; *Mary* (says Christ) *has chosen the better part, which shall never be taken from her*, Luke x. 42. She had chosen Christ, and her choice of him had made him her own, and so her own, as that she could never lose him, never be deprived of him. Indeed a right choice of Christ makes him ours, it unites us to him, and interests us in him for ever. A little further to help you in this business; know that a right choice of Christ is accomplished by these three steps.

1. The soul apprehending Christ (as before) likes him, and approves of him as the best and most suitable Saviour, the most lovely and desirable object in heaven or earth: The soul says of Christ, as they did of the land of *Canaan*, Num. xiv. 7. *The land* (says they) *is an exceeding good land*: So this Christ, says the soul, is an exceeding good Christ, this Saviour is an exceeding good Saviour; there's none like him, there's no beauty like his beauty, no blood like his blood, no fulness like his fulness, no love like his love.

2. The soul desires him, and longs after him, and that with a strong, ardent, and vigorous affection: This is call'd *hungering and thirsting after Christ*, Mat. v. 6. The soul seeing Christ, and approving of him, longingly cries out; O a Christ, a Christ! O, that this good Christ were mine!

3. The soul is by grace sweetly and powerfully determined upon Christ; so as actually to make a solemn and deliberate choice of him; singling him out from all other things in heaven and earth, as the best and most desirable, and most worthy of his dearest and most tender embraces. The soul now pitches his choice upon Christ to be his head and husband, his Lord and Saviour; his rest, his treasure, his happiness, his all for ever. Now by these steps, see that you come up to make a right choice of Christ; be sure that you like him, and approve of him, as the best and most desirable object in heaven, or earth; truly if you view him aright you can't but like him, and approve of him as such. See that the desires of your souls be indeed towards him above all others; view him, till you fall in love with him, yea, till you fall sick of love for him; and be sure not to rest, till you get your will sweetly and powerfully determined upon him; so determined upon him, as to make a free, solemn, deliberate choice of him, passing by all other lovers, and taking him alone into the bosom and embraces of your faith and love. Now that you may be sure to make a right choice of Christ, such a choice of Christ as may keep him yours, and tie the marriage knot between him and you, observe herein these five or six great rules.

1. Be sure that you chuse and embrace Christ himself, and not somewhat else instead of him. 'Tis a great and awakening saying which a worthy divine has: "Many now (says he) take Christ by guess; but be sure that it be he, and only he whom ye embrace; his sweet smell, his lovely voice, his face, his gracious working in the soul, will soon tell if it be he or no." So say I, be sure that it be he; many mistake the object, they close with somewhat else instead

of Christ; at best, they chuse Christ's portion, his benefits, his privileges, his purchases, but not his person: But my advice to you is, pitch on nothing short of the person of Christ; then is our faith beyond all doubt rightly pitcht upon Christ, when Christ himself, not his benefits and privileges only, are chosen and embraced by us. A marriage, if right, is between person and person, not between person and portion, person and estate, that being a resulting thing. So here in this spiritual marriage, faith does not marry the soul to the portion, benefits, and privileges of Christ, but to Christ himself. True, I don't say (first) but that true faith gives the soul an interest in all the benefits, privileges, and purchases of Christ. Nor (secondly) do I say, that the soul may not have an eye to these, and a respect to these in his choice, and closing with Christ; yea, usually these are the first things that faith has in its eye. The first thing the soul looks at, and is taken with, when he is drawn to Christ, usually is that peace, that pardon, that righteousness, that deliverance from sin, death, and hell, which he sees is found and treasured up in Christ for souls: but though these things be so, yet the soul does, and must go higher, he must look at, and pitch upon the person of Christ, or his faith is not so right and complete as it ought to be. Alas! 'tis the person of Christ that is the great fountain of all grace, and all manifestations from God to us, and faith accordingly does close in with his person. The spouse's faith seems so to do, *Cant. v. 10.* She had her eye upon the personal beauty and glory of Christ, and accordingly embrac'd him with her faith and love. Hence also you have so often those expressions; *I sought him whom my soul loved; and saw you him whom my soul loveth?* Her love, and so her faith was fixt upon Christ himself: and thus do you fix your faith and love upon him; so shall you be sure not to miss of a conjugal-union and communion with him.

2. Be sure that you chuse a whole Christ, and not a part of him only: My meaning is, see that you

chuse and embrace in all his offices, as a king as well as a priest, as a lord as well as a Saviour, and as in all his offices, so for all those ends and uses for which God has designed him, and the gospel revealed him to us, for holiness, as well as righteousness, for sanctification, as well as justification. I need not tell you, that Christ is a lord and king, as well as a Saviour, and that as such he is revealed and offered in the gospel to our faith: *Him hath God exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. and they that will have him as a Saviour to give them pardon, must have him as a prince to give them repentance: And you know Christ's rest and his yoke go together in the gospel offer, *Mat. xi. 28, 29*. Nor need I tell you, that God has appointed him, and the gospel reveals him to be our sanctification as well as our justification: So you have it expressly, *1 Cor. i. 30*. Accordingly then do we chuse Christ, and embrace him aright, when we chuse and embrace him, under each notion when we chuse and embrace him, not as a saviour only, but as a lord too; not only as a priest to procure pardon and reconciliation for us, but also as a prince, to rule, govern, and command us; not only as our righteousness to justify us, but as a fountain of grace to make us holy; and thus true faith doeth chuse and embrace him, *Isa. xlv. 23*. Surely shall one say, *In the Lord I have righteousness and strength*: Mark, faith chuses Christ not only for righteousness, but for strength too; righteousness for justification, strength for holiness and sanctification. Christ's language to the soul, in the tender of himself, is such as this, Poor soul, thou art in a dead, lost, undone condition; God is wroth with thee, hell gapes for thee, justice calls aloud for vengeance against thee; and there is no hope, no help, no salvation for thee, but in and by me, and union with me: And lo! I am willing to bestow myself, with all my fulness upon thee: But remember this, that I'll rule and command thee: If I be thy Saviour, I'll be thy lord and king too; if thou wilt share in my redemption, thou must

be content to bear my yoke, to bow to my sceptre, to submit to my laws and kingdom. Accordingly, faith's answer, if right, is this: Content Lord, 'tis but fit, that he that saves, should rule and reign; that he that redeems should be bowed and submitted to, and I do willingly give up myself to thy holy and spiritual government; thy yoke is easy, thy sceptre is righteous, thy kingdom is full of peace and joy, and I desire to come under them: I would have thee to make me holy as well as righteous; to subdue this rebellious heart of mine, and to rule in me by thy pure spirit, as well as to save me by thy perfect obedience. O see, that this you chuse and embrace whole Christ, else your faith is not aright, nor are you like to attain unto a conjugal-union and communion with him.

3. Be sure that you chuse Christ singly and alone, and not join somewhat else with him. Some are for compounding with Christ, they would join somewhat else in partnership with him; but as Christ must not be divided, so neither will he be compounded, he will be all, or nothing at all to souls; and so true faith closes with him: Hence *with the new creature*, Christ is said to be *all, and in all*, Col. iii. 11. The patriarchs (as one observes) had many of them a wife and a concubine, but it is not so here: No as faith chuses a whole Christ, so it chuses a naked Christ, Christ singly and alone, without joining any thing else in partnership with him: It matches the soul to Christ with an absolute exclusion of all other matches. Indeed faith sees enough in a single Christ, a naked Christ, without the help of any thing else, and accordingly chuses and embraces him: And so must your faith chuse and embrace him, or you are like to miss of conjugal union and communion with him. You must chuse him singly and alone, joining nothing with him, and that especially, in the great business of righteousness and acceptance with God. Some would fain compound with Christ in this business; they would have Christ, but they would have their own duties

too; they would have his righteousness, but they would have their own righteousness too; they would have theirs bear a share with his in the point of righteousness and justification before God. Thus 'twas with the Jews of old, *Rom. ix. 31, 32, and x. 1.* 'tis said, *They followed after the law of righteousness, but attained not to the law of righteousness: And why? Because, says the Apostle, they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.* And *chap. x. 3.* *They went about, 'tis said, to establish their own righteousness, and submit themselves to the righteousness of God.* Pray observe; first, they were addicted to, and look'd for salvation by their own righteousness. Secondly, tho' they were addicted to their own righteousness, and would fam'live by it, yet they seem'd not to cleave wholly to that, but would have Christ's and theirs joined together; therefore 'tis said, *They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, i. e.* They were neither wholly for Christ, nor wholly for self, but partly for the one, and partly for the other, joining self with Christ. And thirdly this left them short of righteousness, life, salvation and all: For 'tis said, that upon this account *they attained not unto the law of righteousness.* To join self with Christ in this point, is as dangerous and destructive, as to set up self against Christ. Thus (I say) 'twas with the Jews of old, and thus 'tis with the Papists now. But, my beloved, if ever you would pitch your faith aright upon Christ, you must not once think of this compounding the business between him and self; but Christ must be all in all: We must shut our eyes against all other things in point of justification, and must go forth singly and nakedly to Christ, venturing our eternal all upon the alone bottom of his everlasting righteousness. 'Tis *Calvin's* observation upon the place last quoted, "That the foundation of our first step towards our obtaining an interest in the righteousness of God, is for a man to renounce and go out of his own righteousness." Thus I am sure *Paul's* faith chose and embraced

Christ, *Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.* Those things which were gain to me, says he, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is thro' the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Pray mark, his faith here chuses and embraces Christ for his righteousness and justification, and herein he joins nothing with him; he pitches singly and nakedly upon Christ alone, renouncing all other things whatever. He had as much of his own to have lean'd and depended upon in this point, as any meer man that ever liv'd since sin entered into the world; for, in privileges, in graces, in services, and in sufferings for Christ (I am apt to think) he excelled all meer men; but yet he rests on none of these, no nor so much as joins any thing of it with Christ, but rejects and renounces all, and that with the greatest loathing and detestation in the point of justification, cleaving singly and nakedly to Christ alone; says he, *I account all but loss, yea, dung*, that is, as the most vile and lothsome thing; and I would not be found in it for a thousand worlds. The truth is, to join any thing of our own with Christ in this business, is what excludes us from any share in Christ, or any benefit by Christ. So much the apostle is express in, *Gal. v. 2, 3, 4.* Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you; whoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace. The sum of the Apostles design is to shew, that to join any thing of our own with Christ, in the business of righteousness and justification, and not rest purely and entirely upon him, is what shuts us out from any part and lot in Christ, or any benefit and advantage by him; for pray observe, there were among the

Galatians, some who did *miscere legem cum Christo*, as Calvin's expression is, they did join the law with Christ; pressing and taking up circumcision, as a part of that righteousness whereby they expected to be justified and saved. They were not so gross in their minds (as that great divine there observes) as to expect salvation meerly by the observation of the law, and their own obedience; but they were for sharing the business between this and Christ. Now what says Paul to them? And by what does he labour to antidote the believers among them against this great error? Why (first) he tells them plainly, that if they will join either circumcision, or any thing else of their own, with Christ in this matter, then *Christ shall profit them nothing*, ver. 2. And he asserts the same thing, ver. 4. *Christ* says he, *is become of no effect to you*, i. e. you shall have no part in Christ, no benefit by Christ; Christ is of no use, no benefit, no advantage to you, no more than if he had never been. And indeed, as one observes upon the place, "Whoever is but for an half Christ in this business, loses all of Christ." Secondly, he tells them, that if they will have any thing of their own to bear a share with Christ in the matter of their salvation, *they are debtors to do the whole law*. If they will have their obedience to the law, to have any share in their acceptation with God, then they must keep the whole law, for else all were nothing. 'Tis a great speech of a learned interpreter upon these words; "Whoever, says he, is a debtor to do the whole law can never escape death, because he will always remain under guilt; for no one will ever be found, who will be able to fulfil or satisfy the law, such an obligation therefore is the certain damnation of the man that lies under it." Thus you see, there must be nothing else of our own joined with Christ in the matter of our righteousness and justification with God; but our faith must cleave singly and nakedly to Christ alone; the truth is, Christ's righteousness alone is sufficient to save and justify the worst of sinners; 'Tis the righteousness of God. 2 Cor,

v. 21. and *the righteousness of the law*, Rom. viii. 3. A righteousness every way adequate and commensurate to the strictest demands of law and justice; a righteousness as long, as broad, as deep, as high as the sin and guilt of the most scarlet, crimson sinners can be; and why should any think of joining any thing therewith? Truly, so do, is to reflect great dishonour upon it, and upon the wisdom and grace of God, in ordering it for our justification and salvation. And as we must join nothing with Christ in the matter of righteousness and justification, so neither must we join any thing with him in the matter of our sanctification and holiness. We should look for no grace, no holiness but what comes from him, and is wrought in us by him: Nor indeed will God own any thing for grace and holiness in us at last, that does not come from him. In all respects therefore, let the language of your souls be, O none but Christ, none but Christ.

4. Be sure that you chuse Christ, and embrace him as your rest and happiness; and not only as one that is to bring you unto rest and happiness. Christ, my beloved, is not only the way and means to bring men unto happiness, but he also is himself their happiness; and as such he is tendered to us, and should be chosen and embraced by us: *I am the way, the truth and the life*, (says he) *John* xiv. 16. that is, as one glosses upon it, I am the beginning, the progress and perfection of a Christian's happiness. Sure I am, as Christ, considered as the way, is the means, and what leads us unto happiness; so Christ, considered as the life, is himself our happiness, our supreme happiness: and indeed, we come to Christ as the life, by Christ as the way. Sweet is that saying which I have read in one of the antients on this place; "We thy people (says he, speaking to Christ) do come by thee, to thee, because thou art the way, the truth, and the life; the way in thy example, the truth in thy promise, the life in the reward. *I am the way, the truth and the life*, i. e. as another expounds it, "I

am the only right way, the supreme truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life." And suitable hereunto is *Calvin's* observation upon these words, "The sum (says he) of this sentence is this, he, whoever he be, that obtains and possesses Christ, can want nothing. Whoever therefore is not content with him alone, aspires after something beyond the ultimate and highest perfection." And then he concludes thus; "If any one turns aside from Christ, he can do nothing but err; if any one does not rest in him, he elsewhere seeks upon nothing but wind and vanity: If any one makes out after any thing beyond him, he will find death instead of life." O there are infinite beauties, delights, and perfections in Christ, whereby he is able to fill and satisfy us, and make us happy. And for my own part, as I desire never to be happy, if Christ be not able to bring me to happiness, so I desire no better or greater happiness than what Christ is or can be to me. O there is all in him, all to fill, all to comfort, all to delight and ravish, all to solace and satisfy the largest faculties of eternal souls. "May I have but Christ, (says *Rutherford*) I shall think myself as well heaven'd as any whatever." Truly he, and he alone, is *centrum quietativum*, as the schools speak, the quieting, resting center of the soul. And so the psalmist tells us, *Psal. cxvi. 7*. Indeed, he in his presence, and our enjoyment of him, is heaven and happiness. 'Tis the highest happiness which Christ promises his people here, *John xiv. 21*; and 'tis the highest happiness which his people reckon upon, or hope for hereafter, *Phil. i. 23*. Answerable whereunto is the observation of one upon those words of Christ to the thief upon the cross, *Luke xxii. 43*. *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise*, With me! (says he) O wonderful goodness! he does not simply say, thou shalt be in paradise, or thou shalt be with angels, but thou shalt be with me, thou shalt be satisfied with him whom thou desirest." Thus Christ is the rest and supreme happiness of souls; and accordingly our faith should chuse and embrace him. I will

not say, there is not true faith, where the soul does not come up to such a choice of Christ as this; but this I'll say, that though faith at first may not thus chuse Christ, yet afterwards, as it grows up more towards perfection, it does come to chuse Christ under this notion: And the more distinct it is in chusing Christ, as the supreme rest and happiness of the soul, the more complete and perfect it is. Faith's language to Christ, when come to any maturity, is such as this; Lord, as all my life is in thy death, all my healing in thy wounds, all my righteousness in thy obedience; so all my happiness in thy presence, all my heaven in the bosom and embraces of thy love; Nor have I any in heaven but thee, neither is there any upon earth that I desire besides thee, Psal. lxxiii 25. O, thus chuse Christ? chuse him as the rest, the solace, the happiness of your souls, and never think of any thing else to be the least part of your happiness besides Christ.

5. Be sure that you chuse and embrace Christ with his cross, and not only Christ with his crown; Christ crucified, as well as Christ glorified; Christ upon terms of suffering for him, as well as reigning with him he calling thereunto. Thus also Christ tends himself unto us, and thus must he be chosen and embraced by us, *Matth. xvi. 24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me: And Luke xiv. 27. Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.* Some are for Christ and his crown, but they stick at his cross; they are for a reigning Christ but not for a persecuted Christ; but, my beloved, if you would so chuse him as to be married to him, you must chuse him as upon the cross crucified as well as upon the throne glorified; the meaning is, you must chuse him with a firm resolution to suffer for him, if he calls you thereunto; you must chuse him as one persecuted and distressed on earth, as well as one dignified and glorified in heaven: In a word, you must chuse him for better, for worse, in all estates and

conditions, with all his inconveniences, as well as his privileges; with his poverty, his imprisonments, his reproaches, his deaths, his dangers, his conflicts, and the like; that is to say, you must chuse him with a willing resolution of mind to undergo all this at his call, and for his sake; and this indeed is to close with him in his own way, and upon his own terms. Christ's language to the soul, in the tender of himself to him, is such as this: Soul, I am willing to be espoused to thee, I am willing to bestow myself, with all my riches and fulness upon thee; but if thou wilt have me and these, thou must be content to suffer for me, to be reproached, to be persecuted, to be imprisoned; yea, to be *killed all the day long* for me, when I please to call thee thereunto. And indeed faith, when right, closes with him upon these terms; content, says the soul, being acted by a true spirit of faith, Christ upon any terms that he thinks fit, Christ with the cross, Christ with reproach, with imprisonment, with death, with whatever he pleases, rather than go without him. And indeed we need not be scared and terrified at the cross; for there is no cross so bitter, as Christ is sweet; there is nothing we can suffer for Christ, that is worthy to be compared with the glory we shall have in Christ, and with Christ: Besides, Christ is worthy to be suffered for, and therefore welcome Christ, and welcome his cross too. Truly, my beloved, Christ's cross is sweet, very sweet, as he makes it: That sweet finell'd and perfum'd cross of Christ, says one, is accompanied with sweet refreshments, with the kisses of a king, with the joy of the Holy Ghost; therefore fear not at it, but chuse him with his cross as well as his crown.

6. Be sure that you chuse Christ often, and think it not one single act or work only to chuse and embrace him. If you would indeed make sure of Christ, and an espousal to him, you should chuse him and embrace him anew every day. We are apt to look upon the work of chusing and embracing Christ, as one single act or work only; but, my beloved, 'tis a

work that should be often repeated; by often repeating of it, we should grow more sound, more strong, more distinct in it: As a second edition corrects the errors of the first, so after-acts of believing in this kind, do supply the defects of the first act: Indeed, my advice to you is, that you would make as much conscience of chusing and embracing Christ afresh every day, as of praying every day, especially if you be either young beginners in believing, or old believers under clouds and darkness. St Paul made fresh choices of Christ to the very last, *Phil. iii. 8, 9.* And 'tis the duty of them that do believe, to believe: *These things write I unto you, says St John that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, 1 John v. 13.* They did believe, and he would have them to believe afresh every day; and so would I have you do, every day renew the first great act of faith in your closing with Christ, so shall every day be a day of espousals between Christ and you; and so by degrees shall you come to the sense and comfort of this espousal. I have read of some who never came to a sight and sense of their union with Christ, till they took this course. Thus I have now shewn you the way how you may come to be espoused to Christ, as well as what an Husband he is, what great things he does for his spouses, and how much his heart is set upon an espousal with sinners. Now, will you take this course? Or shall all be lost with you? Possibly the whole will have a different effect upon those that read or hear these things: Some, I hope, will be won and gained to Christ by them; others, I fear, will reject and despise all, and that either out of a spirit of prophaneity, or insensibility of their need of, or concernedness in these things. If any soul shall reject them out of a spirit of prophaneity, I would say to such a soul, as *Salomon* to the scorner, *Prov. ix. 12.* *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it; thou alone shalt bear all thy sins, and all the wrath and vengeance of God due to them: If any shall reject these*

things out of a spirit of insensibility of their need of and concern in them; their ease is the more to be pitied; for the more insensible they are of their misery without Christ, the greater is that misery of theirs. "What more miserable says *Austin*, than "for a miserable man not to commiserate himself?" Others, it may be, stand doubting and trembling, daring neither to reject, nor yet to embrace: Not to reject, because their need of Christ is so great, the worth of Christ so eminent, and the guilt of rejection of Christ so black; nor yet embrace because their sins are so many and their unworthiness so great. To such I would, say, cease thy trembling, and delay thy closing with Christ no longer; it has been thy sin, let it be thy shame and sorrow that thou hast neglected and refused Christ so long, saying with *Austin*, "I have loved thee too late. O, thou so ancient and yet so new a beauty; I have loved thee too late." And for encouragement, I would say to thee as the servant did to his Lord upon such an occasion as this, *Luke xiv. 22.* *Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.* Tho' many sinners, and great sinners have been received to mercy, yet still there is room for thee, and for all that have a mind to Christ: there is a room in Christ's heart, there is a room in Christ's arms, there is room in his covenant, there is room in his kingdom, there is room upon his throne with his father for thee: But if yet any shall reject this offer of love, and persist so to do, such will at last find there is room in hell, room in the infernal pit, room in the place of torment for them: Therefore as life and death are once more set before you, so I beseech you to chuse life, and not death that you may live for ever.

C H A P. XI.

Being a contemplation of the infinite love and condescension of Christ to souls; and the unspeakable comfort and happiness of believers in this sweet espousal.

IN the view of all that has been hitherto declared we may well take up an admiring contemplation of Christ's love and condescension, and believers comfort and happiness; the one and the other being exceeding great and glorious. O! for Christ to marry poor souls to himself, and for poor souls to be married to Christ, how great is the love of the one, and the happiness of the other herein.

1. How great is the love and condescension of Christ in marrying souls to himself! Next to his becoming man, and dying for them; Wherein can he testify greater love and condescension to them than in this? There are, among many others that might be mentioned, that will argue his love and condescension herein to be wonderful and glorious, two things; one is the infinite disparity and disproportion between the parties him and them; the other is the unspeakable nearness and gloriousness of that union and relation which he takes them unto with himself: Both which I desire you to contemplate.

1. Contemplate the infinite disparity and disproportion between him and them. What proportion is there between a king and a beggar? What proportion is there between an ant and an angel? Yea, between the smallest worm, and all the angels in heaven? Infinitely less proportion is there between Christ and sinners; and yet he espouses them to himself. What shall I say? He is both high and great, we are base and vile; he is blessed and glorious, we are wretched and despicable; he is a great king, we are poor slaves and vassals, yea, the worst of slaves and vassals, being the slaves and vassals of sin and satan. And to sum up all in a few words; he is God, and we are creatures; yea, he is an infinitely pure and

holy God, and we are unspeakably impure and unholy creatures: O how great is the disproportion! and yet he marries us to himself. What proportion is there between God and the creature? The creature at the best is but a small drop of being, but God is *mare effendi*, a sea, a fountain, an ocean of being: The creature is, and has but a little good; but, *Deus est bonum infinitissime infinitum*, as Bradwardin speaks of him, "God is a most infinitely infinite good." The creature is a depending thing; the being of the creature is a depending being, the very nature of the creature lies much in dependance: but God is an absolute and independent being, he being of himself and from himself: Indeed, *all other things are of him, and from him, and to him*, as the scripture speaks. Now for God to marry the creature, and espouse the creature to himself, O, what love, what condescension is this! and yet greater lovethan this does Christ shew: For what proportion is there between an infinitely holy God, and universally sinful, defiled, and polluted creatures? The distance between God and us, as we are creatures, is great; but the distance between the infinitely holy God and us, as sinners, is in some sort unspeakably greater. 'Tis our duty, and should be our joy to know and keep our creature-distance with God; we should rejoice to think that God is so infinitely above us; but 'tis our misery, and we should tremble to think of our sinful distance from God, that distance I mean that sin is, and has caused between God and us. Now for a holy God to espouse sinful creatures to himself; yea, for a God so infinitely holy, to espouse souls who are so utterly sinful to himself, as the best of us all by nature are; this is greater love and condescension still. "O, wonderful commerce! (says one of the ancients, speaking of Christ's dying for his people) the king dies for the servant, God for man, the Creator for the creature, the innocent for the guilty." The like I may say here; O wonderful condescension! the king marries a slave, God the Creator, the pure and holy One, polluted and defiled sinners.

True indeed, he makes them saints by and upon marrying of them; but he finds them sinners when he first makes it a time of love to them: O, adore this love, this condescension!

2. Contemplate the unspeakable nearness and gloriousness of that union and relation which he takes them into with himself: as the distance and disproportion between the parties is infinitely great, so the union and relation he takes them into, is very near and glorious. The union between the vine and the branches is near; the union and relation between the head and the members is near; the union and relation between the husband and wife is near; but all these are but shadows and representations of that union, and relation which Christ takes believers into with himself, which must therefore be nearer and greater than all. 'Tis indeed (as upon occasion has been before declared) next for intimacy and glory, to the essential and personal union; yea, it comes so near the highest union of all, the union that is between the Father and the Son, as that it is set forth in scripture by the same expressions, that that union is, viz. by *being and dwelling in each other*. Yea, Christ himself seems to bring it so near that great union, as that he makes that the pattern of it, and accordingly prays for it for his people, *John xvii. 21. Neither pray I for these alone, but them also which shall believe on me through their word that they also may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*. Pray mark, he prays for the accomplishment of his union for them, as the top and perfection of all their happiness; and not only so, but as that which comes as near the great union between the Father and himself, as can well be conceived. 'Tis a sweet saying which one of the ancients has upon these words of Christ, "What more glorious, says he, than this union? What further or higher, poor soul, can'st thou either have, or desire to have, than this, thou shalt be one with thy bridegroom? O happy, exceeding happy, yea, of all o-

thers most happy union!" In a word, nearer then this creature can't well be taken into Christ, nor can they have a greater glory put upon them, than there is put upon them in their being taken into this union and relation to him. How great therefore must the love and condescension of Christ herein to believers be! O, for him to take such so near himself, as to make them one with him, to lay them in his bosom, to communicate himself to them! This is love indeed, and this we should contemplate and admire.

2. How great is the comfort and happiness of believers, in being thus married and espoused to Christ! we say of such or such a woman that is well married, that she is well disposed of, and is very happy in an husband. But, O soul, how well art thou disposed of, who art disposed of to Christ? And how happy art thou in a husband, who art married to him? What, soul, married to Jesus, to sweet Jesus, to lovely Jesus, to Jesus the Son of God! O, what sweet what strong consolation may this be to thee! and how should it fill thy heart with holy triumph and exaltation for ever? This alone may comfort thee in all difficulties and troubles of life, and in all the conflicts and agonies of death. Cast thine eye back on the nature of this espousal, and what an husband Christ is, and what great things he does for his spouses, as the one and the other of them has been declared; and then judge of thine own happiness, in being taken into this relation to him. In *Cant.* vi. 9. 'tis said concerning the spouse of Christ, *That the daughters saw her, and blessed her, yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her*: They look'd upon her to be the most happy on earth. And truly, soul, when I look upon thee as the spouse of Christ, I can't but in like manner bless and praise thee; and thou thyself may'st well bless thyself, and say, blessed be the day that ever I was born, blessed be the womb that bare me, and blessed be the paps that gave me suck! but yet to raise this comfort and happiness of thine a little higher, that thou mayest re-

joyce in thy lot, the lines being fallen to thee in pleasant places; Consider three things:

I. Consider; That this relation of thine to Christ, gives thee a full interest in him, and all that is his. This the spouse much gloried and rejoiced in, as her crown and happiness, therefore she is frequently up with it in a way of holy boasting; *My beloved is mine, and I am his*, Cant. ii. 16. And again, *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*, Chap. vi. 3. Being espoused to Christ, Christ is thine; and Christ being thine, his blood is thine, his righteousness is thine, his love is thine, his fulness is thine; the fruit of all his sufferings, the virtue of all his offices, the sweetness of all his relations is thine. Christ being thine, all is thine, all the promises are thine, all the ordinances are thine, life is thine, death is thine, time is thine, eternity is thine, things present are thine, things to come are thine, 1 Cor. iii. 22. O, what a goodly heritage hast thou, and how should thy soul bless the Lord, that ever he drew thee into this union and relation to him? What a spring of comfort may this be to thee in all conditions? *Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed*: Why? *For thy Maker is thy husband*, Isa. liv. 4, 5. The truth is, tho' possibly thou mayest have little of this world, yet in having Christ, thou hast all thou needest, and art capable of to make thee happy for ever.

II. Consider; That this union and relation of thine to Christ, remains firm and stedfast for ever. And O, what sweetness does this add unto it! True, may the soul say, this relation is a blessed relation, and full of sweetness and comfort: But will it hold? Yea, it will hold, and that for ever. The best comforts thou enjoyest here below, will shortly have a period; and the sweetest relations thou standest in here, will after a while be dissolved and broken; but thy union and relation to Christ, will last for ever, that can never be dissolved; *I will betroth thee unto me*, says God, *yea, I will betroth thee unto me*: But, Lord, for how long? (may the soul say) Why, for

ever, says God, *Hos. ii. 19.* O that word, *for ever*; this puts an infinite sweetness into this relation of thine. This one word, *for ever*, (as one observes upon this place) makes a misery, (tho' but small in itself) an infinite misery; and a mercy, tho' but small in itself) even an infinite mercy. How much more does it make that which in itself is so great, as thy union and espousal to Christ is, sweet and desirable?

O but, says the soul, never was there such a wretch as I am; never did any carry it towards Christ as I do: True he has made love to me, and I have some hopes that I have closed up with him in a marriage-covenant; but alas, never was there such a rebellious, revolting, backsliding heart as mine is: I am ever playing the harlot, and going a whoring from him; by means of which, I fear he will break union and communion with me, and at last cast me off. I answer, truly soul, this is very sad, and thou shouldest ly low in the dust in the sense of it; yet to encourage thee against thy fears, consider three things.

1. Consider, That Christ is not foreward to take advantage against souls for their failing and breaking with him: He is not *strict to mark what is done amiss*, *Psal. xxx. 3.* He is not prone to cast off, and to put away; no, 'tis what he *bates*, *Mal. ii. 16.* True, he may, and many times does withdraw from us, and frown upon us, but putting away he loves not; yea, he pities and spares us under our infirmities, and his bowels are moved for us.

2. Consider; That before ever Christ made love to thee, and took thee into this relation with himself, he knew perfectly what manner of one thou wouldst be, and how thou wouldst carry it towards him; and yet all could not hinder him from shewing this favour to thee: Why then shouldst thou think it would cause him to break with thee now? The soul may be apt to say, did Christ think I would be such a wretch, that I would so grieve him, so offend him, that I would carry it so unworthily towards him, under all his love as I do? Yea, soul, Christ thought it, he knew

it perfectly before-hand. In *Deut. xxxi. 21.* 'tis said, *That God knew what Israel would do before-hand*; So Christ knew before hand how thou wouldst slight his love, grieve his spirit, violate his laws; he knew how thou wouldst offend and affront him by a proud, vain, wanton behaviour before him; he knew how thou wouldst backslide, and go a whoring from him; and had he not seen and known that he had love enough, and bowels enough to cover and pass by all, he would never have made love to thee. Hence, when he *betroths*, he is said to do it in judgment, *Hos. ii. 19.* Christ knew what he did, and what an one he married, when he married thee to him himself. And as all could not hinder his love at first, so neither shall it take of his love from thee now.

3. Consider, That thou mayest have many failings and miscarriages, be guilty of many breakings with Christ, and departures from him; and yet the marriage covenant between him and thee not be broken. A woman may be guilty of many failings and miscarriages, many defects and misdemeanors, and yet all not break the marriage-covenant between her husband and her. And so here, O how sweet is that scripture! *Psal. lxxxix. 30, 21, 32, 33, 34.* *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: Then will I visit their transgressions with a rod and their iniquity with stripes.* And what follows? *Nevertheless,* says he, *my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break; nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* Pray mark, Christ's people may sin, and sin greatly, and he may sharply chastise them for their sins; yea, he may seem to take away his loving kindness from them, and may really for a time suspend the influences and manifestations thereof; but his covenant love and faithfulness to them, that remains firm and stedfast to them for ever, notwithstanding all. So again, *Jer. iii. 1, 14.* *Though thou hast play'd the harlot with many lovers, yet return again,*

but then all tears shall be wiped off from thine eyes. Now thou art in death's offer, as the apostle was, but then there shall be no more death, Now thou art full of sorrow, thy days are spent in grief, and thy years in sighing; but then there shall be no more sorrow, sorrow and sighing shall both fly away for ever. Now thou art full of pains; yea, as the holy prophet of old complained, thou art pained at the very heart; in the sense of thy own afflictions, and in the sense of the Church's afflictions; in the sense of thine own sins, and in the sense of the world's sins, thou art pain'd at the very heart, but then there shall be no more pain, Now, Thou sowest in tears, but then, thou shalt reap in Joy: Now, thou goest forth weeping, yet bearing precious seed, then thou shalt return rejoicing, bringing thy sheaves with thee: Now thou art in a storm, a storm of affliction, a storm of temptation, a storm of persecution; thou art afflicted tossed with tempests, and not comforted, it may be as the church some times was, Isa. liv. 11. But then he will make thy storm a calm, and so bring thee unto thy desired haven, to allude to that, Psal. cvii. 30. Now the devil and his messengers are besetting of thee, and will give thee no rest; then they shall all be trodden under foot, and thy soul shall act one eternal triumph over them; saying, as she of old in her song did, O, my soul thou hast trodden down strength.

2. Then Christ will turn all thy blackness into beauty, all thy sinful deformity into perfect purity and holiness for ever; and this is much more sweet than the former. Alas, says the soul, turn my water into wine! true that is sweet; but there is that which lies heavier upon me than all the troubles and afflictions in t^h world; and that is my sinful blackness and deformity. O, this stained polluted, defiled nature of mine! this fountain of sin and enmity against God, that is within! This is that which is the burden too heavy for me to bear. Well; for thy comfort know, that thy husband sweet Jesus, will come; and when he comes, he will turn thy blackness into

beauty, thy sin into holiness; then he will sanctify thee, and cleanse thee, that he may present thee to himself a glorious spouse, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. v. 26, 27. Poor soul, thou hast now many stains, many spots, and those such as thou art apt sometimes to think are not the spots of God's children, but then all these spots shall be wiped out, and thou shalt be without spots; yea, thou shalt not only be without spot, but without wrinkle too; There may be wrinkles where there may be no spots, and these are blemishes. O, but then thou shalt have neither spot nor wrinkle; thou shalt be perfectly freed from lesser, as well as greater sins; yea, thou shalt have neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing; nothing that looks like sin, nothing that thou canst suppose to be in the least blemish or defect; there shall not be the least print or footstep of the old *Adam* (as one speaks upon the place) left in thee, or upon thee, but thou shalt be altogether holy and without blemish; Christ will then perfectly fill thee with his own spirit, beautify thee with his own image, deck thee with his own ornament, enamel and irradiate thee with his own glory; for then he will make thee like himself, both in holiness and happiness, 1 *John* iii. 2. Poor soul! now thou art groaning under a body of sin and death, under the unclean motions of sin, the impure lustings of the flesh, the cursed imposings of a base, vile, unbelieving heart, that is imposing upon thee in every duty, every condition, in every relation. Now thou art pestered with the springings, buddings, blossoming, and ebullitions of lust and corruption within thee; but when sweet Jesus comes, there shall be an end of all this. Christ he overlooks all this now, but then he will do it all away, and thou shalt shine with the perfection of beauty.

3. Then Christ will solemnly present thee to his Father as his spouse, in the presence of all his holy Angels: And O, how glorious and joyful will this be! In *Gen.* xxiv. 67. we read, that *Ysaac took Re-*

Leah, and brought her into his mother's tent. So when dear Jesus comes to consummate the marriage between him and thee, he will, being attended with all his holy angels, bring thee into his Father's house, and will there present thee to him as his spouse, saying, Father, here is my spouse, here is one whom in the day of everlasting love thou gavest unto me, one whom I have redeemed to myself by my blood, and married to myself by thy spirit in the gospel; this is he that I was made sin and a curse for; and though he was in his blood and gore, when I first made love to him, yet lo! now here he is spotless and faultless before thee: Father own him as thy Son's spouse, and delight in him for ever. O, how sweet, how glorious will this be! Suppose some great prince were married, and upon his marriage should take his spouse in his hand, and lead her into the presence chamber of the king his father, and there present her to him, to the end he might take notice of her, as his son's spouse, and shew suitable respect and favour to her what a sweet thing would this be? But alas! what is this to the presentation Christ will make of thee to his Father at his coming, *Who will then present thee faultless into the presence of his glory with exceeding joy?* Jude v. 24. When David and the elders of Israel, brought up the ark from the house of Obed-Edom, 'twas with great joy and shoutings, 1 Chr. xv. 25, 28. But, O, when Christ, attended with all his holy angels, shall bring and present thee into the presence of his Father, what joy and shoutings will there then be? Surely there will be great rejoicing on all hands; God the Father will greatly rejoice, Christ the Son will greatly rejoice, God the Holy Ghost will greatly rejoice, the angels will greatly rejoice, thy soul also will greatly rejoice. God the Father will greatly rejoice to see his Son's spouse come home to him so richly deck'd and adorn'd; Christ the Son will greatly rejoice, that he has gotten his spouse into his arms and bosom, never to part with her more; the Holy Ghost will greatly rejoice, to see his work

in tying the marriage knot between Christ and the soul completed; the angels will greatly rejoice, as being friends both to the bridegroom and bride, and as partaking with them in the marriage supper; and thou thyself will greatly rejoice, in that now thy happiness is consummated, and that thou shalt for everly in the bosom and embraces of thy husband's love. O, how sweet, how glorious will this be!

4. Then Christ will lead thee into the bride-chamber, the mansion he has prepared for thee in the Father's house, where thou shalt dwell for ever in his presence, and sit down eternally with him and his Father at the marriage-feast. And O, how sweet and glorious will this be! being thus beautified and presented to the Father, what now remains for thee, but to enter upon thy lot with all the saints, and to possess the jointure Christ made thee in the day of thine espousal to him, even eternal life and glory with himself for ever! What now remains for thee, but to sit down in the full views of his glory, the full visions of his face, the full enjoyment of his presence, the full embraces of his bosom, the full incomes of his love, and all for ever? Here in the day of espousal thou hadst had some views of him, thou hast seen his back parts; but then thou shalt behold his glory for ever, *John xviii. 24.* Here thou hast seen him through a glass darkly, but then thou shalt see him face to face, thy visions of him shall be both full and immediate, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* Here there have been some intercourses of love and delight kept up between him and thee, thou hast had some of the kisses of his mouth, some embraces in his bosom, but then thou shalt have thy fill of his love, being sweetly immerst and swallowed up in the ocean of it for ever: O, how sweet will this be! When Christ and thy soul have met in an ordinance, how often hast thou said with *Peter*, 'Tis good to be here? And when he has given thee now and then a little taste of his love, how hast thou been ravished with it, crying out with the sponse, *thy love is better than wine.* But O, what will it be to enjoy all this in its

Happy
Birthdays
to
you

Henry
Southworth

Daniel Smith

