

Discourse of God's Being the Author of Reconciliation

by Stephen Charnock

The mystery of reconciliation is the fundamental aspect of the gospel, where God reconciles humanity to Himself through Christ.

Scripture: John 10:18, Romans 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:18, Ephesians 1:6, Ephesians 1:10

Topics: "Reconciliation Through Christ", "Divine Forgiveness"

Description

Stephen Charnock preaches about the importance of reconciliation by Jesus Christ, highlighting the mystery and greatness of this act. The reconciliation through Christ comprehends the counsels of eternity and the transactions of time, shining forth the wisdom and grace of God. The double reconciliation expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 involves a fundamental reconciliation obtained at the death of Christ and an actual reconciliation complied with by faith. The proclamation and acceptance of reconciliation are essential parts, with God being the principal person wronged and reconciled to through Christ.

Transcript

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. 2 Cor. 5:18,19.

These words are small in bulk, but great in mystery, it is the heads of the gospel in a nut-shell; the most sparkling diamond in the whole golden ring of Scripture. It comprehends the counsels of eternity and the transactions of time. A wonder in heaven, God bringing forth a man-child to be a propitiation for sin, which was the Jews' stumbling-block and the Gentiles' scoff. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; but wherein the wisdom and grace of God's counsel in heaven, and the power of his actions on earth, clearly shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. The Jacob's ladder, the upper part fixed in heaven, and the lower foot standing upon the earth. Angels descended on that; God descends to man by this in acts of wisdom and grace, and man ascends to God in acts of faith and love.

If there be any mystery in Christianity more admirable than another, it is this of reconciliation. If any mystery in this mystery, it is the various and incomprehensible engagement of the Father in it, in and through Christ. If anything in Scripture sets forth this mystery in a few words like a picture in a little medal, it is this which I have read, wherein the apostle gives us a short but full and clear account of the doctrine of reconciliation, which is the substantial part of the gospel.

There is a double reconciliation here and in the following verse expressed.

First, Fundamental; at the death of Christ, whereby it was obtained. This is the ground of God's laying aside his anger; this is reconciliatio legalis or de jure.

Secondly, Actual or particular, when it is complied with by faith. This regards the application of it, when God does actually lay aside his enmity, and imputes sin no more to the person. Which consists of two parts.

1. The proclamation of this: ver. 20, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' declaring God's willingness to take men into favour. This is the declaration of reconciliation de jure, or the right of reconcilment. The gospel contains the articles of peace, and the counsels and methods of God about it. It is the copy of God's heart from eternity.

2. Particular acceptance, which is on our part an acceptance of the terms of reconcilment, on God's part an acceptance of us into his favour, and a non-imputation of our sins to us, which the apostle calls, Rom. v. 11, the receiving the atonement; this is the accepting the atonement, the ground of reconciliation on man's part, and the application on God's part.

The first, viz., the proclamation of it to us, is God's promise to us, the other is the performance; the one is God's gracious favour to us, the other is God's gracious act in us. Christ is the cause of both these reconciliations: of the fundamental reconciliation by his death, of our actual reconciliation by his life; the one by himself in person, the other by his deputy the Spirit.

God. God is taken here by some* "ousiodos", for the whole trinity, Christ, "oikonomikos", as mediator.

Others, and more likely, understand by God the Father, to whom reconciliation is ascribed per modum appropriationis, as he is the fountain of the divinity, as the fathers use to call him. As the Father is the principal person wronged, and declaring his anger against us, the reconciliation is principally made to him; in which sense we are said to have 'access to the Father,' Eph. ii. 18, through Christ, and by the Spirit. The Son brings us to the Father, and the Spirit directs us to the Son. Christ takes away God's enmity to us, and the Spirit takes away our enmity to God. As the first creation is appropriated to the Father, so is the second also. The apostle having described the new state of things, ver. 17, tells us, ver. 18, that 'all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' that this new state is of God, who is no less the creator of the second state than of the first. Adam, the common head of God's appointment, by his falling, overthrew himself and his posterity; God therefore appoints another head to reduce men again to himself. What is here called reconciling, is called, Eph. i. 10, 'gathering together in one,' "anakephalaiousasthai". God would gather them together to himself under one head, as they had been separated from him under one head.

God was in Christ. Some make this expression to signify no more than by Christ, ver. 18; or for Christ's sake: Eph. iv. 34, 'As God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.'

But the expression notes something more than for Christ's sake. In actual pardon, Christ, is the moving cause by his intercession, as well as the meritorious cause by his propitiation: 1 John ii. 2, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation,' &c. But the first purpose of reconciliation, and the appointing Christ as the medium for it, had no moving cause but the infinite compassion of God to his fallen creature. Christ was not the moving cause of this, though he be the

meritorious cause of all the effects of it, and laid the foundation of an actual reconciliation by being the centre of the agreement between the justice and mercy of God. God's anger was appeased by the death of Christ, but God was the first author of this propitiation, appointing this method of restoring the creature, and this person, or Jesus, to do it.

God was in Christ. It may be meant of the Trinity: the Father was in Christ constituting and directing, the Son was in Christ by personal union, the Spirit was in Christ gifting him for this work of reconciliation; but I would rather understand it of the Father.

Being in Christ is not meant,

1. Of that essential inness or oneness whereby the Father and the Son are one in essence. Or as a father of the flesh and his son are said to be of the same nature, disposition, and likeness, whereby we say the father lives in the son, in the lineaments and temper of the son, whereby he resembles the father. It is true, the father and the son have the same nature, the same perfections and divine excellencies; so the Father is in the Son without any respect to reconciliation. He is so in the Son in creation also; he is so also one with the Spirit. But this notes some singular manner of inness in Christ, which is not in the third person, or in any else.

2. Nor in regard of that affection the Father bears to Christ. He is indeed in a peculiar manner in Christ in regard of love, more than in all believers besides. He loved him as the head, believers as the members. This is common to believers with Christ, though not in the same degree.

3. But it notes some peculiar manner of operation in Christ as mediator. Redemption was not the work only of the Son; the Son wrought it, the Father directed it; the Son paid the price, the Father appointed him to do so, received it of him, accepted it from him, and accounted it to others through him, which is that we are bound to believe, as Christ tells the Jews, John x. 38, 'that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him,' John xiv. 20, 'I am in my Father.' The Father is in Christ by way of direction, support, and influence, and Christ in the Father by way of observance, obedience, and dependence. As the world was in Christ as in their surety and head, satisfying God, so God is in Christ as in his ambassador, making peace with the world. All things that Christ acted and managed in this work are to be referred to God as the prime author.

The world. The world properly signifies the frame of heaven and earth, and all creatures therein, joined together by an exact harmony, order, and dependence upon one another; but in the Scripture is chiefly understood of mankind, the top of the lower world and end of its creation. It is frequent in all writers to put the place for the inhabitants; and it is taken for the most part for the corrupted world, the world fallen under sin and wrath, and opposing God: John i. 10, 'The world knew him not.' And when God takes some out of the world, he calls them not by the name of the world, but his church. And those that he brings out of this sinful condition, he is said to bring 'out of the world' John xv. 19, and to choose 'out of the world,' John xvii. 6. The world is fundamentally reconciled, there being a foundation laid for the world to be at peace with God, if they accept of the terms upon which this amity is to be obtained; or all ages of the world, those before the coming of Christ in the flesh as well as those after, 1 John ii. 2.

Reconciling. The greatest controversy lies in this word, whether by it be meant God's reconciliation to us, or our laying down our enmity against God. Socinus and his followers say God was not angry with man, he was reconciled before, but that this place is meant of affection towards God, because it is said we are reconciled to God, and not God to us.

But learned men have cleared this. The phrase in heathen authors of men's being reconciled to their gods, is always understood for appeasing the anger of their gods, and escaping those dreadful judgments either actually inflicted or certainly threatened from heaven. By reconciliation of us to God in this place cannot be meant our conversion, or any act of ours.

1. Because the reconciliation here spoken of was the matter of the apostles' discourses and sermons, and the great argument they used to convert the world to God. If, then, that sense were true, it would be an impertinent argument, unworthy of those that Christ called out to be the first messengers and heralds of this redemption. The sense of their discourse would run thus: God has already converted you, therefore be converted to him; as it is nonsense to exhort a man to do that very act which he has already done.

2. This reconciliation does formally consist in the non-imputation of sin to men. Now this is God's act, not the creature's. 'Not imputing sin' and 'forgiving sin' are the same thing, Rom. iv. 7, 8, therefore the reconciliation itself is an act of God. If God were to be brought into our favour as a person offending, we should be said rather not to impute God's supposed offences to him, and not to charge him with that which was the ground of our hatred of him.

The apostle tells us that God does not impute the trespasses of the world to them emphatically, as Grotius observes, but he does to another whom he had made sin for them: ver. 21, 'For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' And the apostles were sent about the world to testify this benefit, that men might give credit to God, and turn to him.

And upon the declaration of this doctrine, that God had in Christ laid aside his anger for their sins, and having punished another for them, would not punish them if they embraced by faith what was proposed to them, they besought men that they would lay aside their enmity against God, as he declared himself willing to lay aside his enmity against them, and had testified this by sending his own Son to bear their punishment.

There is a like place with this: Rom. v. 6, 10, 'if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' If Christ died for sinners to make an atonement for them, it was then to procure God's well-pleas'dness with them, because they had offended him. But if he died to bring God in favour with us, then his death was an atonement for God, and to expiate God's offences, who never was, nor can be, guilty of any towards his creature.

But it is evident the reconciliation there mentioned, as well as in the text, was antecedent to conversion, and therefore is not the same with the conversion of the creature.

1. Because otherwise the apostle's argument would have little validity in it, for it proceeds a majori, 'much more, being reconciled by his death, we shall be saved.' If God were so infinitely kind to us as to turn away his anger from us by the death of his Son when we were yet enemies, how much more tender will he be of us since he has taken us into favour, and we are actually converted to him!

2. The effect of this reconciliation is a saving from wrath by the blood of Christ: ver. 9, 'Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' Therefore this reconciliation must be by appeasing that wrath under which we should otherwise have fallen.

And the effect of it is to have peace with God: ver. 1, 'We have peace with God;' whereas, if it were meant of God's being brought into our favour, it should have been said, God has peace with us, and that God has

access to us.

3. Justification is the effect and consequent of this reconciliation. And this Crellius confesses, *Justificatio est effectus reconciliationis*. But this is the act of God, Rom. iv. 5, Rom. viii. 33.

4. Reconciliation is here attributed to the death of Christ as a distinct cause from that of conversion: Rom. v. 10, 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;' that is the *reconciliatio impetrata*, which in the second expression of our actual or applied reconciliation is ascribed to the life of Christ or intercession, that being the end for which he lives in heaven, Heb. vii. 25.

5. We are said to 'receive the atonement,' Rom. v. 11, which is the same with 'receiving forgiveness of sins,' Acts x. 43. But to receive conversion is a phrase not at all used in Scripture. When a man turns to the east, no man says he receives turning to the east. Besides, if it were meant of bringing God into our favour, it were more proper to say God received the atonement, and not we.

6. If by reconciliations were meant our bending our hearts to love God, there could not be any sufficient reason rendered why the sanctification of the heart should be laid down by the apostle as the end of this reconciliation, as it is Col. i. 22, 'Yet now has he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unreprouable in his sight.' For nothing can be both medium and *finis sui ipsius*, its own end and means too.

By reconciliation is meant the whole work of redemption. The Scripture has various terms for our recovery by Christ, which all amount to one thing, but imply the variety of our misery by sin, and the full proportion of the remedy to all our capacities in that misery. Our fall put us under various relations; our Saviour has cut those knots, and tied new ones of a contrary nature. It is called reconciliation as it respects us as enemies, salvation as it respects us in a state of damnation, propitiation as we are guilty, redemption as captives, and bound over to punishment. Reconciliation, justification, and adoption differ thus: in reconciliation, God is considered as the supreme Lord and the injured party, and man is considered as an enemy that has wronged him; in justification, God is considered as a judge, and man as guilty; in adoption, God is considered as a father, and man as an alien. Reconciliation makes us friends, justification makes us righteous, adoption makes us heirs.

This verse then represents to us the doctrine of redemption under the term of reconciliation. In it we have,

I. The principal author and spring of this reconciliation, God.

II. The immediate efficient or the meritorious cause of it, Christ.

III. The subjects, God and the world: 'the world to himself.'

IV. The form of this reconciliation, or the fruit of it: 'not imputing their trespasses unto them,' not charging them with their crimes.

V. The instrumental cause of actual reconcilment, the ministry of the word.

The observations we may take notice of are these:ó

First, Reconciliation by Christ is the foundation of the regeneration of nature: ver. 17, 18, 'All things are become new, and all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' The design of God was to reduce us to happiness, which was not to be done without the satisfaction of his justice. Christ

by his death satisfies that; in his life is a model of our sanctification. God is first the God of peace before he be the God of sanctification: 1 Thes. v. 23, 'and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' The destruction of the enmity of our nature was founded upon the removing the enmity in God. There had been no sanctification of our natures had there not been a redemption of our persons, no more than for devils, who remain unholy because they remain unreconciled. Besides, since God has been at peace with us he will sanctify us, that the actual peace may be preserved by the weeding out the remainders of the enmity in our natures. It is as he is a God of peace that he conquers any of our spiritual enemies. He will never engage in the bruising Satan under our feet till he be our reconciled God in Christ: Rom. vi. 20, 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.'

Secondly, God does not act principally as a Creator, but as a reconcilable God ever since the first promise. All blessings flow from him as standing in that relation. All his providences in keeping up the world, the fruitful showers, the enjoyments of the sons of men in the world, are upon the account of the Mediator, wherein he has declared himself a reconciling God. He acts towards the world as a reconciling God, towards believers as reconciled. He is reconcilable as long as he is inviting and keeps men alive in a state of probation. But he is not reconciled but to those that accept of the way of reconciliation which he has wrought in his Son, and according to the methods whereby he wrought it. The relation of a Creator cannot cease while there is any creature; but if God should act towards the world only as Creator, the dissolution of the world had been long ago, because the law of the creation had been transgressed. But he acts as a 'faithful Creator', 1 Pet. iv. 19, as a Creator according to the promise of the new covenant, which his faithfulness respects.

Thirdly, And that which I only intend, is this,

I. Doctrine. God is the great spring and author of our recovery. Or God was principally engaged in the whole undertaking and effecting of our redemption and reconciliation by Christ. God was the first mover in those acts whereby the first foundation-stone was laid and the building reared. All was begun by his order, and managed by his direction and influence: 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who has reconciled,' i. e. all things are of God in this reconciling act. The whole Trinity is concerned in it.

Each person acts a distinct part. The glory of contriving is appropriated to the Father, as he that made the first motion, counselled Christ to undertake it, sent him in the fullness of time, and bruised him upon the cross, making his soul an offering for sin. The glory of effecting it is ascribed to the second person, both in the satisfactory part to the justice of God, and also in the victorious part, the conquest of Satan. The glory of working the conditions upon which it is enjoyed, and the applying it, is attributed wholly to the Spirit.

The story of the creation seems to intimate some other work to be done in the world by God besides that work of creation which God the Father made at that time: Gen. ii. 2, 'And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made, and rested from all his work which he had made;' and ver. 3, 'and rested from all the work which God created and made;' thrice repeated, He rested from that work which he had made, he made no more of that kind and nature. But a rest he could not find; he rested from it, but not in it; there was a work of a nobler strain behind to be made by him for his rest.

He foresaw how soon he should be disturbed by the entrance of sin; and though he rested from making any more creatures of that sort, yet he had works of grace to make afterwards, more wonderful than those of nature. He had a further display to make of his gracious perfections, which could not be deciphered on the face of that creation; but a work there was remaining wherein he intended to bring forth the glory of his

divine excellency which yet lay hid. This is the highest draught of divine wisdom and goodness; therefore if the Father created all things wherein his wisdom and goodness appears in a shadowy manner, drawn with fainter colours, he should have no less hand in this, wherein his wisdom was to appear without a veil, in its full lustre and eternally durable colours, when this material world shall pass away: Eph. iii. 10, 'A mighty variety of wisdom,' "polupoikilos sophia", which delights the Creator and amazes the creature!

He would no less have a hand in the second creation of all things by Christ than he had in the first, since a greater glory was to redound to him as reconciling than as creating, by how much it is more excellent to give man a happy being than to give man a bare being. God is therefore said to be the 'head of Christ,' 1 Cor. xi. 3, as Christ is the head of man. As man was made to declare the glory of Christ, so is Christ formed to declare the glory of God. As all influences the members receive in point of direction and motion are from the head, so all the influences Christ had were from God, as the head directing and moving him.

As the head counsels what the members act, so God counsels what Christ acts. God brings forth this Mediator as his divine image, and diffuses all his perfections in and through him before the eyes of men, and thought it a work too worthy to be contrived by any but himself, and transacted by any but his Son. God only sent him to make it, and called him back to himself as soon as ever he had finished it.

We shall consider,

1. What reconciliation is, and wherein the nature of it consists.
2. That God the Father is and must be the prime cause of this.
3. Wherein the agency of the Father appears, and by what acts it is manifested in this transaction.
4. The use.

1. First, What reconciliation is.

(1.) Reconciliation implies that there was a former friendship. There were once good terms between God and man, there was a time wherein they lovingly met and conversed together. Man loved God and was beloved by him, till he left his first love and broke out into rebellion against him. God pronounced all his creatures 'good,' and man at the last 'very good,' with an emphasis. A God of infinite goodness could not hate his creature, which was an extract of his own image. Man had the law of God engraved upon his heart, and therefore could not in that state hate God, while he was guided by that law of righteousness and exact goodness in himself. Thus was man God's favourite above all creatures of the lower world, styled his son, Luke iii. 38; but how quickly did he prove a parricide, and a quarrel was commenced between God and him! Now, reconciliation is piecing up of a broken amity, and a reglutination of those affections which were disjoined. And the miracle of this reconciliation made by God in Christ excels the former friendship; that might be broken off, as we find by woeful experience it was. This as to some acts and fruits may be interrupted, not abolished; as the beams of the sun may be clouded, but the influence of the sun cannot be eclipsed. Then God and man were not so closely united but they might be parted; now God and the believer are so affectionately knit that they cannot be separated.

(2.) Reconciliation implies an enmity and hatred, or at least a disgust on one or both sides. Adam was created in a state of God's favour, but not long after his creation he apostatised to corruption; by his creation a child of God's love, by his corruption a child of God's wrath. While he stood, he was the possessor of paradise and heir of heaven; when he fell, God seals a lease of ejection, and man

becomes an heir of hell; he turns rebel, and joins with Satan, God's greatest enemy. God took the forfeiture of his possession, turns him out of house and home, and hinders his re-entrance by a flaming sword turning every way to keep his fingers off from the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24, or hope of felicity upon the former score. Man invaded God's right of sovereignty, and God, of a sovereign Father, becomes a punishing judge. Man falls into sin, and wrath falls upon man; sin separated between God and him, and unsheathed the flaming sword. Thus are heaven and earth at variance. The hatred is mutual: God hates men, not as his creatures, but sinners; man hates God, not as God, but as sovereign and judge. Man turned off God from being his Lord, and God turned off man from being his favourite; man vents his serpentine poison against God, God pours out his wrathful anger on man. On man's part this enmity is by sin; on the part of God (1.) from the righteousness of his nature, since he cannot behold iniquity without indignation, Hab. i. 13. As he cannot but love goodness, so he cannot but hate iniquity, Ps. v. 5, 6. He hates and abhors all the workers of iniquity. He hates the sins of his saints, though not their persons; he hates the persons of wicked men, not primarily, but for their sin. (2.) From the righteousness of his law made against sin, whereby he cannot but according to his veracity punish it. His curses must be executed, his law vindicated, and his justice satisfied; truth and fidelity to his law, his nature, his justice engages him. Since there is nothing of the life of God in us naturally, there can be nothing of the love of God to us; for what affection can the Deity have to brutishness, and infinite purity to loathsomeness? Now, there having been such an enmity, man is properly said to be reconciled. Good angels cannot properly be said to be reconciled, because there was no difference between God and them. It is a question, because believers are said to be reconciled, and reconciliation implying a former hatred, Whether God hated believers before their conversion? In answer to this,

[1.] To say God hated them fully before, and loves them now, would argue a mutability in God, which the apostle excludes: James i. 17, he is 'the Father of lights,' who is so far from having any real change, that he has not 'a shadow' of it. If he did not love his elect before Christ died for them, and loves them afterwards, then there is a change in his will; for to love them is nothing else but to will eternal life to them, and for God to hate any is not to will eternal life to be their inheritance. If God did so hate his elect before Christ's death as to will that they should not inherit eternal life at all, and after Christ's death did will that they should, his will would then be inconsistent and changeable. If God chose them from eternity, he loved them from eternity; if he chose them in Christ as their Head, Eph. i. 4, he loved them in Christ as their Head, he could not choose them to eternal life in those methods without loving them. As he loved Christ the Head before he died for those that were to be his members, so he loved those that were to be his members before they were actually grafted in him. As he loved Christ as Mediator before he was actually sacrificed, so he loved his chosen ones before they were actually reconciled. When Christ came to reconcile, he came to do God's will; and when any soul is actually reconciled, it is not a change in God's will, but the performance of God's eternal will.

[2.] There is a change in the creature, but that does not imply a change in God. It is not a new will in God, but a new state in the creature. The creation adds no new relation or accident, but a change and effect in the creature. And as the schools generally determine, it is one thing *mutare voluntatem*, another thing *velle mutationem*; as a master commands a servant this work one day, another work another day, the master changes not his will, but wills a change in his work, or as some illustrate it, as a physician prescribes his patient one sort of physic one day, another kind of physic the next, the physician does not change his will, but will a change. As a man has a mind to adopt a poor child to be his son, affection is the ground of this resolution; but he lets him for a while run about in rags, and seems to take no notice of his misery, yet at length takes him, and clothes him, and adopts him. There is a change in the state of this

child, but not in the affection, the original of it. There was a change in the prodigal when he returned, but not in the father when he embraced him: "My son which was lost is found,' it was a new finding of the son, but not a new affection in the father.

Well, but how may God be said to love or hate believers before their actual reconciliation, since he is the author of it?

[1.] God loves them with a love of purpose. God loves them with a love of purpose or election, but till grace be wrought, not with a love of acceptation, we are within the love of his purpose as we are designed to be the servants of Christ, not within the love of his acceptation till we are actually the servants of Christ: Rom. xiv. 18, 'serves Christ,' and is 'acceptable to God.' They are alienated from God while in a state of nature, and not accepted by God till in a state of grace.

There is in God a love of good will and a love of delight, amor benevolentiae, seu "eudokias", amor complacentie seu "euarestias". The love of good will is love in the root, the love of delight is love in the flower. The love of good will looks upon us afar off, the love of delight inns itself in us, draws near to us. By peace with God we have access to God, by his love of delight he has access to us. God wills well to them before grace, but is not well pleased with them till grace.

Christ is the effect of his love of benevolence and compassion to relieve us, which love ordered Christ as the means, John iii. 16; but Christ is the cause of that love of friendship wherewith God loves us. A king has a kindness for a prisoner in his bolts, and sends some to clothe him; but he has no delight in him to think him fit for his embraces, till he be delivered, both from his fetters and his filthiness. An elect person is not simply beloved before his actual reconciliation, because he has no gracious quality which may be the object of that love.

Neither is he simply hated, for if so, how could he have any gracious habits infused into him whereby he may be made the object of delight? It cannot be denied but that God intends to bestow supernatural gifts upon those he has chosen, else wherein does his love consist? And it cannot be conceived how a simple hatred can consist with such an intention. He loves them to make them his friends, and after reconciliation he loves them as his friends. It is love in God to make an object for his love.

God loves an object qualified with grace, therefore to qualify an object so as to make it lovely, argues love in God to that object he so qualifies; love in intention before the qualification. Hatred could never be the foundation and cause of that qualification; sea, the gift of Christ, which is the effect, does suppose the love of God which is the cause. God indeed was angry with all mankind, but it was an anger mixed with love; he was angry, but yet willing to be appeased.

A pregnant example of this, which may give us an understanding of it, we have from the mouth of God himself: Job xiii. 7, 8, 'My wrath is kindled against thee' (speaking to Eliphaz), 'and against thy two friends. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering.' There is a cloud upon God's face, but his mercy as the sun peeps out behind the cloud, as he acquaints them with his anger, so he shows them the way to pacify it.

Though his wrath was kindled, yet he is not so ready to inflame it as he is to have it quenched by the means he prescribes them, wherein Job was a type of Christ, whose sacrifice God only accepts as well as appoints. There is no love of complacency either in the persons or services of any, but as considered in Christ the reconciler satisfying the justice of God. When an elect person is engrafted in Christ, that love

which was bubbling in the fountain from eternity flows out in the streams.[2.]

God does hate his elect in some sense before their actual reconciliation. God was placable before Christ, appeased by Christ. But till there be such conditions which God has appointed in the creature, he has no interest in this reconciliation of God; and whatsoever person he be in whom the condition is not found, he remains under the wrath of God, and therefore is in some sense under God's hatred.

First, God does not hate their persons, nor any natural or moral good in them. Not indeed the person of any creature, for as persons they are his own work. The creation was good in God's eye at the first framing, and whatsoever of goodness remains is still affected by an unchangeable Being, for infinite and unbounded goodness cannot hate that which is good either naturally or morally. Christ loved that morality he saw in the young man. God loves their moral qualities, and they are the common gifts of his Spirit, and qualities wherewith he has endowed them; as their primitive natures were good, so what approaches nearest to that nature has some tincture of goodness, and therefore has some amiableness in the eye of God. But he took no pleasure in them, neither in their persons nor services, as acceptable to him, without the Son of his love.

Secondly, God hates their sins. Sin is always odious to God, let the person be what it will. God never hated, nor ever could, the person of Christ, yet he hated and testified in the highest measure his hatred of those iniquities he stood charged with as one surety. The father could not but hate the practices of a prodigal, though he loved his person. God loves nothing but himself, and other things as they are like himself, and in order to himself; therefore God must needs hate whatsoever is contrary to his immaculate purity, and different from his image. He hates the sins of believers, though pardoned and mortified; though his mercy pardons them, his holiness can never love them; though the punishment be removed from the person, yet the nature and sinfulness is not taken from the sin. Much more does God hate the sins of his unconverted elect, which are neither pardoned nor mortified. If he hates sin in its weakness, much more in its strength. He hates their sins objectively, that is the object of, and the only object of, his hatred; their persons terminative, as the effects of his wrath do terminate in their persons. Though sin is the object of God's hatred, as being a contrariety to his holy law, yet it is not the object of his wrath, but the person sinning; actions are not immediately punished, neither can, but the persons so acting. In that respect God may be said to hate the persons of men, and of his elect before conversion, as the effects of his wrath do terminate in them.

Thirdly, God hates their state. Though God loves morality in men, yet that does not include the acceptance of their persons, or of their moral acts, or any love to their state. Though Christ loved the young man's morality, yet he could not love his state, since it was at some distance from the kingdom of heaven, though not so great a distance from it. The elect before their conversion are in a state of enmity, a state of darkness, a state of ignorance, and a state of slavery; and that state is odious to God, and makes them incapable, while in that state, to 'inherit the kingdom of God.' 1 Cor. vi. 9-11, 'Such were some of you,' such sinners, and in such a state of sin that could not inherit the kingdom of God. A man that has a love to a beggarly child, and does intend to adopt him, he loves his person, but hates his present state of nastiness and beggary; and when he does actually adopt him, changes his state, his relation, and divests him of his filthiness. The state of the elect before actual reconciliation is odious, because it is a state of alienation from God; whatsoever grows up from the root of the old Adam cannot be delightful to him.

Fourthly, God hates them as to the withholding the effects of his love. We call the effects of God's grace grace, and the effects of God's wrath wrath. So God may be said to hate an elect person before his

conversion, because, being in that state a child of wrath, the wrath of God abides on him, and the curses of the law are in force against him. As God is said to repent, when he withholds those judgments and effects of his anger which he had threatened against a nation, so God may be said to be angry and to hate, when he pours out vials of wrath, and also when he withholds the fruits and proper effects of love.

(3.) Proposition as a caution. Though God be the prime author of this reconciliation, yet no man is actually reconciled to God till he does comply with those conditions whereupon God offers it. 'God was in Christ' when he was 'reconciling the world;' we must be in Christ if we be reconciled to God: he in a way of direction, we in a way of dependency. Till a man does believe, though God has been reconciling the world in Christ, yet he is not under the actual peace with God, though under the offers of this peace.

'The wrath of God abides' on him, as well as the offers of peace are proposed to him, otherwise what need had the apostle to beseech men to be reconciled to God, upon the account that he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, if there were not something to be done by us in order to it: ver. 20, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' To what purpose should we be exhorted to lay down our arms, discard our enmity, offer up our weapons, if nothing were to be done on our parts.

It is true, God is in Christ 'reconciling the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' But to whom? To all the world without any distinction? Though the offers are made to all, yet while men accept not of them, sin will be imputed to the unbelieving world. Shall we think God will recede from his anger till we recede from our sins? What rebels can be said to be reconciled to their prince till they observe the conditions in his proclamation? Christ cannot present men friends till by faith they are united to him; for though there be an accomplishment of the general reconciliation in the death of Christ, yet there is no benefit accruing to us till full union by faith.

Much less can man be said to be reconciled from eternity; the apostle cuts off that conceit: Col. i. 21, 'Yet now has he reconciled,' now, not before. If it were from eternity, the Colossians were never enemies to God, if always reconciled, the apostle speaks a falsehood, for to be enemies and friends at the same time implies a contradiction, to be reconciled from eternity, and yet but now, are inconsistent. Alas! we come into the world with the badge of God's wrath upon us, and our backs turned upon God.

The first thing we do is to kick against him. Reconciliation in the decree is from eternity; but we cannot more properly be said to be reconciled from eternity because of that, than to be created and born from eternity, because decreed to come upon the stage of the world in time. Reconciliation in the purchase is temporary; we were reconciled meritoriously at the time of Christ's death, but no more actually reconciled than we can be said to be born when Adam was created, because we were in him as a cause.

Reconciliation particular and actual is temporary; we have then God appeased towards us, when we can by faith hold upon his Son upon the cross, and with a hearty sincere faith plead the wounds made in Christ's sides, the sorrows in his soul as a propitiation for sin, an atonement of God's own appointment. It is not sin but the sinner is reconciled. 'God will hold an eternal antipathy to sin, as sin does to God; God will never be pacified towards sin, though he will towards the sinner.

He is in Christ reconciling the world, not sin in the world, to himself; let none, therefore, build false conceits upon this doctrine. We must distinguish between reconciliation designed by God, obtained by Christ, owned by the gospel, received by the soul.

(4.) This reconciliation on God's part in and by Christ is very congruous for the honour of God, and absolutely necessary for us.

[1.] For the honour of God.

First, For the honour of his wisdom. Had not a mediator been appointed, mankind had been destroyed at the beginning of his sin, God had lost the glory of his present works, and his wisdom would seem to lie under a disparagement in publishing a rest from his works and pronouncing them good, when the very same day (as some think) they should be sullied with an universal spot, and the choicest part of the lower creation turned back upon God, and all the other creatures employed to base and unworthy ends, below their creation and contrary to the honour of their Creator. Without the appointment of a reconciler, the honour of God in creation had been impaired, the creation had been in vain. No creatures could have attained the true end of their creation, since man, whom they were designed to serve, had apostatised from the service of his and their Creator; they could not be employed by him in that state for the service they were ultimately intended for.

Secondly, For the honour of his truth and justice. Since God had decreed and enacted that whosoever sinned should die, God must either, upon man's sin, destroy him to preserve his truth and justice, or neglect his own law, and turn it upside down for the discovery of his mercy. These things were impossible to the nature of God; he must be true to himself, just to his law. If justice then should destroy, what way was there to discover his mercy? If God should restore man to his friendship without any consideration, where would be the honour of his justice, the firmness of his truth in his threatening? The wisdom of God finds a way for the honour of both, whereby he preserves the righteousness of his law and the counsel of his mercy, not by changing the sentence against sin, but the person, and laying that upon his Son as our surety, which we by the rigour of the law were to endure in our own persons, whereby justice was satisfied with the punishment due to the sinner, and mercy was satisfied with the merit due to our Saviour.

[2.] Necessary for us. Necessary since all men had breathed in the contagion of Adam, had his corrupt blood, and the poison of the old serpent diffused in their veins; and being thus enemies to God, became subject to wrath and the eternal malediction of the law. Necessary at the very first defection; had there not been an advocate to interpose, we cannot conceive how, according to the methods of the established law, God could have borne one moment with the world. There was as much necessity for some extraordinary remedy against the biting of the old serpent as against the bitings of the fiery ones in the wilderness, which could not be cured by any natural means. They must have inevitably perished under their venom, and man under his. If we come to God in ourselves, what are we but as criminals before a judge, stubble before fire? God is infinitely good, i. e. infinitely contrary to evil; and if to evil, then to us, who think, speak, act nothing but evil. The justice of God upon man's sin required that man should endure an infinite punishment; and because he could not endure a punishment intensely infinite, by reason of the limitedness of his nature, as a finite creature, therefore he was to endure a punishment extensively infinite in regard of duration, whereof he was capable by reason of the immortality of his soul. Since things stood thus, the fallen creature could not be restored to felicity till some way were found out to restore the amity, with a full satisfaction to both, that God might, without any dishonour to himself and his law, rejoice in his creature, that the creature might with a firm security rejoice again in God. The will of God is an evidence of the necessity of it. Why did God ordain it if it had not been necessary? The natural inclination and will of Christ as man was contrary to it; for he in the flesh desired this cup might pass from him. How, then, should the infinite wisdom of God, the infinite affection to his Son, put him upon that which was so ignominious, and the infinite wisdom of the Son consent to such an event, without an apparent necessity?

2. Second thing. That God the Father must needs be, and is, the author of this reconciliation.

1. That God must needs be the author of this work. Reconciliation in all the parts and degrees of it, in all the model and frame of it, is his act. The first invention of this way, the first proposition, the last execution and acceptation, owns him for the author. To him we must needs owe the contrivance, declaration, and accomplishment. If God be the first cause in all things, he is the first cause in the highest of his works. Nothing comes to pass in time but what was decreed in eternity, If anything were done which he did not first know, he were not infinitely wise; if anything were done which he did not first will, positively or permissively, he were not infinitely supreme and powerful. All things are wrought by his counsel, which is the act of his understanding; all things are wrought by his will, which is the act of his sovereignty, Eph. i. 11. By God in Scripture sometimes is meant the Father, by way of eminency, because he is the fountain of the Deity: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

(1.) No creature could be the original author of this work.

[1.] All human nature could not first invent it. The whole wisdom of Moses and the Jewish nation in the wilderness could not find a remedy against the bitings of the fiery serpents, which indeed were so venomous that they were absolutely mortal. And if they were the presteres, as the Greeks call them, which word signifies the same that the Hebrew does, burning serpents, no remedy was found against their venom for many ages after. In the time of the Romans' flourishing, the poison suddenly inflamed the blood, puffed up the skin, disfigured the countenance, deprived them of the shape of men, with the benefit of life; an exact representation of the misery of man by the fall.

No remedy could be found in nature against this evil in the figure, no more can any against the evil represented by it; neither the languishing law of nature, nor the sickly philosophy of the heathens, could ever find a cure. The reconciliation of God to man was too stupendous a work for the joint wit and wisdom of man to arrive at. Man was so plunged in the sink of lapsed nature, that he knew not how to desire it; so amiable were his dreams of happiness in his rebellion, that he had no mind to cherish any thoughts of it.

He was so furious in his unjust war against God, that he had no will to accept of any such motion. The world was filled with all unrighteousness, and men were 'haters of God,' Rom. i. 29, 30. By all their wisdom they knew him not, 1 Cor. i. 21. No mind to know God, no will to be at peace with him. Had the wisdom of the world been sensible of their deplorable condition, could it have contrived a way for the glorifying his mercy without invading the rights of his justice, they might have dreamt of a pardon from his mercy as the supreme governor.

But how would the contentment of his justice, as eminent a perfection in God as that of his mercy, and the stability of his truth in his threatening, have insuperably puzzled them? The difficulty lay not upon the point of mercy; every day's sun, and every seasonable shower were rich discoveries of this. But there was no direction in the other case, to be read in the whole manuscript of nature. The heavens declare the glory of God as creator, not as reconciler; they discovered his glory, not any way of entrance into it.

Had they had thoughts of accomplishing it by a surety between God and them, where could they have pitched upon one worthy of God's acceptance? If they could have found out and proposed one, what tie was there upon God to accept any other offer for the offenders but to exact it of their own persons? What man could have thought of such an extensive love as the reconciliation, not of one or two particular men, but of the world, by so strange a means as the death of God's own Son?

We read, indeed, of some one or two of the heathen philosophers that declared an impossibility of the world's reformation without God's taking flesh, but none imagined anything of the death of the Son of God; no, not the Jews, but here and there one of their rabbis, long before his coming. Oh the immense grace of God, to discover that to us in his gospel, which all the wisdom of fallen nature might have fruitlessly studied to eternity! As no man can frame an universal law, accommodated to the several states and tempers of all the men in the world, and to those notions of fit and just in the minds of men, but God, who knows what he has engraved upon men's minds; so none but God can know how to find a way of redemption that may answer the glory of all his attributes, and the pressing urgency of men's necessities.

[2.] But might not the unblemished wisdom of angels, out of pity to mankind, have found out a way of reconciliation? They knew much more of God than man; they knew the wonders of his goodness, yet had seen many of their own order drop into hell under his wrath. They might know that the devils, a stronger nature, could not satisfy God for their offence, much less man, the weaker nature. They would never have stood gazing upon it with astonishment when it was revealed, had it been so obvious to their clear and comprehensive reasons. The greatest learning they have in it is by the church: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' Objectively, not efficiently. It was a mystery hid in God, and only in him; not an angel seems to have had any thoughts of it till the revelation of it was made to the church. Now, not before; all the angels in heaven were ignorant of it, and probably understood not the meaning of the first promise in paradise till the coming of Christ in the flesh. Yea, after the revelation, those intelligent spirits have not a perfect knowledge of the whole scope of the gospel state, for, 1 Peter i. 12, they 'desire to look into' those things they could never be inventors of, or consulters in, that which they did not understand. Well, then, angels and men may admire it when revealed, but not before imagine it; they may applaud it, but never contrive it. Which of them could presume to nourish such a thought, that the Father should call out his eternal Son to be a temporary sufferer, to veil his divinity with the rags of an afflicted humanity? What, then, was impossible to the approved wisdom of men and angels, must only be ascribed to the wisdom and grace of God.

(2.) God the Father must needs be the principal in this business.

[1.] The order of the Trinity requires it. There is an order in the operation as well as the subsistence of the three persons. As the Son is from the Father in order of subsistence, so the actions of the Son are from the Father in order of motion and direction. The Son is sent by the Father, not only as man, but as God; for the Spirit, that has only a divine nature, is said to be sent by the Father and the Son. The persons are all equal: Philip. ii. 6, Christ 'thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' yet one operation is appropriated to the Father, another to the Son, another to the Holy Ghost, in regard of order; and the Father, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is the fountain of all divine operation.

As the sun is the fountain of its beams, so it is the fountain of all the operation of its beams. All things are of the Father, by the Son. He 'created all things by Jesus Christ,' Eph. iii. 9. He reconciled us unto himself by Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18. All things of the Father as the fountain, by the Son as the medium. There is a priority of order in the divine paternity upon the account of generation, and this order is observed in the divine institutions. Baptism is first in the name of the Father, then of the Son, then of the Holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19.

Now, it is most congruous, that as the Father was the original of our Saviour's person, so he should be of his office; as he was God of his substance, so he should be mediator of his will, the Father first sets the

copy, after which the Son writes. John v. 19, 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do, for what things soever he does, those also does the Son likewise.' All operations begin first from the Father; this place the ancient fathers understood of Christ as the second person, not as mediator.

If the first motion come from Christ, the order of working in the Trinity would be inverted; the Father would then do what he sees the Son do; the Son would be the director, the preceptor, and the Father the follower; the Son would go before in proposal, and the Father follow after in consent. God would not then be the God of order in heaven. Besides, the love of the Father would not then be the principal cause of our redemption, upon which the Scripture everywhere places it, but the love of the Son.

Nay, if the authority of constituting the mediator were not in the Father by way of order, there could be little or no testimony of his love since the fall of man. To imagine, therefore, any other root of our redemption, is to contradict the order in the trinity. But this is agreeable to our conceptions of things, as far as we can apprehend such mysteries. The Father from himself, Christ from the Father, the Spirit from both, so the Father contrives this, and is pleased with it, as being the most exact model of his love, wisdom, and justice, and the highest act of love he could show to his Son.

The Son consents to it, and is pleased with it, as being the highest act of love he could show to his Father, and to men, in being their reconciler, and to angels in being their head. The Spirit is pleased with gifting him, as being the greatest demonstration of his power to gift Christ for so great a work, therefore the Spirit is said to 'rest upon him,' Isa. xi. 2. Not only noting the continuance of the Spirit on him, but the satisfaction the Spirit should have in his employment, as much in gifting Christ for it, as Christ in undertaking and managing the work.

[2.] If the Father were not principal in it, the undertaking a reconciliation could not of itself be valid.

First, There had been an injury to the Father in undertaking it without his full consent at least. The Father is the principal party injured, and was therefore to be consulted with in that which concerned his own right. He is also the governor of the world. It is not convenient that a public work should be undertaken in a nation without the consent of the chief magistrate, who may else make it frustrate. When princes of equal dignity are at war, none undertakes the composing of the quarrel, till both parties accept of the mediation. But here is the supreme Lord of the world and ungrateful rebels at variance; the chief governor unjustly wronged. Now, every man would judge it a presumption for any to offer terms of peace to his enemies, and undertake the satisfaction of himself without his own consent in the case.

Secondly, The Father could only by right appoint the terms upon which, and the way whereby, this reconciliation should be made. The Father being the law-maker could only dispense with his law, and judge that satisfaction was fit for the vindication of it. The law ran in that strain, that the party sinning should die. Had the letter of the law been exacted, every man had been a stranger to salvation; the right, therefore, of waiving the letter of the law, while he maintained the reason and substance of it, belonged to the Father. As the supreme Governor, too, he could only transfer the punishment from the offending party to another that was willing to stand under the penalty in his stead. Since creation is appropriated to the Father, and sin entered upon the world immediately after the creation, it was God as a creator was principally injured. The first sin struck more immediately at the Father, as creator; unbelief at the second person, the Redeemer; and a despitfull contempt of Christ, after the manifestation of him by the Spirit, and the motions pressing upon men, is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. Christ intimates this when he says, 'They have both hated me and my Father;' i. e. me now, as well as my Father before. Non they show

a particular hatred to me by unbelief, as well as they have done to my Father formerly by idolatry. The Father, therefore, only had the right to appoint the way of reconciliation according to his good pleasure; since he was chiefly dishonoured, he is fittest to prescribe the method which he judges most convenient for the restitution of his honour. As all his attributes were wronged by sin, so it was fit all his attributes should be glorified in reconciliation of his enemies. It was not fit that glory he is so jealous of should be entrusted in any hands but by his own will; and his prescribing all the ways of vindicating and illustrating it, and the glorifying of himself, was his end in appointing Christ to this work: Isa. xlix. 3, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified;' and the glory of God seems to be a name whereby Christ is called: Isa. lx. 1, 'The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' Since, therefore, a greater glory was his end in redemption than barely in creation, he had as much a right to be principal in the miracle of restoration as in that of creation.

Thirdly, The Father was not obliged, nor could be obliged by any to entertain any thoughts of a reconciliation. He might, without any prejudice to his goodness, have demolished this defiled world, and by his power reared another wherein to show forth the glory of his immense perfections; he might have made good the law upon the person of every sinner, much less was he bound to accept of any surety; he might have exacted the satisfaction at the hands of the criminal before he would have been reconciled. Being sovereign, it was at his liberty whether he would be appeased or no towards rebels. If he was willing to be appeased, he might have chosen whether he would have admitted of any surety to stand in their place. When Reuben offered Jacob his two sons as a pledge for Benjamin, Gen. xlii. 37, Jacob was not bound to receive this offer, but at his liberty whether he would take them or no. Nor was Naboth bound to part with his vineyard for a better than his own upon Ahab's offer, 1 Kings xxi. 2, 3. No man is bound to part with his propriety in his goods, or his right over his prisoner; but if a price be agreed upon, he is then bound by the rules of commutative justice to set the prisoner at liberty.

Fourthly, Therefore if the Son of God himself had been incarnate, and died for the world without the Father's call and mission, the Father was not obliged to accept it as the price of our redemption. For all things without a call are of themselves invalid, and depend only upon the will of the person to whom they are related for their acceptance. God's institution confers validity upon any things. Could the brazen serpent ever have cured the bitings of the fiery ones had not God fixed it as a remedy?

Three things go to the establishing the reconciliation: 1. The dignity of the person reconciling; 2. The valuableness of the satisfaction he offers; 3. The call of the person injured, or the acceptance of it.

The two first makes the merit sufficient, the third only makes it accepted. Had Christ endured all the torments of the cross, the acceptance of him for us might not have been, had not the Father's constitution of him for that purpose preceded his undertaking. Though the death of Christ had an intrinsic value, and therefore was in itself acceptable, yet the consent of the Father only made it accepted; he 'made us accepted' in Christ, Eph. i. 6; therefore our acceptance depends first upon the acceptance of Christ. The strength, therefore, of it in Scripture is put upon God's well-pleas'dness with him, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And upon God's call of him, Eph. i. 9, it was his will, the 'good pleasure of his will', and 'purposed in himself;' it rose up in his own heart and mind. Though the satisfaction of Christ derives not its virtue of meriting from the grace of God, yet it derives its acceptance from the grace of God. The grace of God, and the merit of Christ, relate to one another as the cause and the effect, the antecedent and the consequent. The merit of Christ is the cause of our actual favour with God, but the merit of Christ is not the first spring of it; for it is subordinate to the general grace of God, which orders it as a means of that reconciliation which he purposed in himself. In short, it is like this case: when a man

desires the goods of another, and offers him as much as they are worth, and more, though what he offers has an intrinsic value to compensate the possessor for those goods, whether the person accept of that offer or no, yet the acceptance of it depends purely upon his will, and the sum has no validity to purchase what is desired without the will of the present possessor.

First, If the Father had been obliged to receive any satisfaction, it must be from the person offending. No obligation can be conceived incumbent upon him to receive it from a person wholly innocent, though it were of infinite value, because none can transfer over the right of another but he whose right it is.

Secondly, Had not the Father fully agreed to this, I do not see how Christ could have made a compensation by his sufferings. Had he assumed a body, and laid down that body, and courted death, had that been justifiable without a call? The humanity of Christ was a creature, and therefore obliged by the law of nature, as creatures are, to preserve itself. All men are bound to do so, unless God calls them to lay down their lives, who is the supreme Lord of life and death. Suppose our Saviour might have laid down his life intentionally as a compensation for us, what could he have undergone in his humanity but a temporal death? Was it not more we were to suffer? Was not the wrath of God due to our souls? The soul was the chief offender, the soul then ought to be the principal sufferer. If God therefore had not appointed Christ for those ends, the wrath of God could not have been inflicted upon the soul of Christ, for who should have inflicted it? Had it been just with God to have loaded a person with his wrath, who was innocent from any actual or imputed crime both in his own person and transferred from others? His mere bodily sufferings could not have been a recompense for the sin of the soul. The order of things fairly lies thus: man being unable to satisfy God for himself, nor any creature being sufficient to satisfy God for them, the Father calls the Son to take upon him the human nature, and by satisfying his justice for sin, restore us to happiness. The Father's call, and his own voluntary consent, make him capable of having our sins transferred upon him, and bearing them in his own body on the tree. And Christ lays it upon the commandment received from his Father, together with his own free consent: John x. 18, 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father.' He had an authority to lay down his life, he had also a promise of restoration of it by his resurrection. And to this end he had received, not only an invitation, but a command, which gave him full authority to die, and a ground also to plead the validity of it, for the ends designed by it. Therefore had he not received such a command, he had had no authority to lay down his life; no more than Abraham had authority to sacrifice Isaac of his own head, neither could he have challenged any acceptance of it for man at the hands of God.

Thirdly, The Scripture does ground the merit of Christ upon the grace of God. It is called the 'gift of God,' and 'the gift by grace, which by Christ has abounded to many,' Rom. v. 16, 16, &c. Some bring this place to prove the absolute efficiency of Christ's merit, had he laid down his life without the appointment of the Father, because, as the sin of Adam had demerit enough to condemn the world, so the righteousness of Christ had merit enough to save the world. But the question is, whence this merit did arise? It did arise personally from Christ himself and the dignity of his person; but as to the acceptati

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