

Chapter VIII.

Of Christ the Mediator

SECTION I.—It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and men, the prophet, priest, and king; the head and Saviour of the Church, the heir or all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Exposition

A mediator is one who interposes between two parties at variance, to procure a reconciliation. Before the fall, there was no need of a mediator between God and man; for, though there was an infinite distance in nature, yet, there was no variance between these parties. But upon the fall the case was altered; God was dishonoured, and highly offended; man was alienated from God, and subjected to his judicial displeasure; and as man was unable to satisfy the claims of the divine law which he had violated, if he was to be restored to the favour of his offended sovereign, the interposition of another person was requisite, to atone for his guilt, and lay the foundation of peace. This is the office and work assigned to Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man; and the present section relates to his divine appointment to this office, and the donation of a people to him as his seed.

I. It pleased God, from all eternity, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man. God being the party offended by the sin of man, to him belonged the right of admitting satisfaction by another in the room of the personal transgressors. But he not only admitted of a vicarious satisfaction; he also, in the exercise of boundless grace and unsolicited love, provided one equal to the arduous undertaking, in the appointment of his own Son to his mediatory office. Our Lord did not engage in the work of mediation without a special call and commission from his Father. From eternity he was chosen and appointed to execute the office of mediator between God and man; hence he is said to be "set up from everlasting," and

“fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.”—Prov. viii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 20. When he was on earth he often declared, that what he did in accomplishing the work of our redemption, he did by a special commission from the Father, and in obedience to his will.—John. Vi. 38. The divine appointment of Christ to his mediatory office affords a striking proof of the love of the Father, who “sent his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins,” and lays a firm foundation for our trust in Christ. Without the appointment of his Father, his work would not have been valid in law for our redemption; but this appointment assures us, that the whole work of his mediation is most acceptable to God, and affords us the highest encouragement to rely upon his finished work for our eternal salvation.

II. The Father, from all eternity, gave to Christ a people to be his seed, and to be by him brought to glory. That a definite number of mankind, who were chosen by God in the exercise of rich and sovereign grace, were given to Christ, is manifest from the distinction made betwixt them and the world. Christ designates them “the men that were given him out of the world,” and declares that he prayed “not for the world, but for them whom the Father had given him.”—John xvii. 6, 9. In these passages the world is opposed to those that were given to Christ, and this must convince every unprejudiced mind that the persons given to Christ are a definite number, selected by God from the world of mankind. They were given to Christ to be his seed. It was not left uncertain whether Christ, as the reward of his mediatory work, would have a people to serve him; it was stipulated that he should have a seed, in whom he would see the travail of his soul.—Is. liii 10, 11. They were given to him that he might redeem them, and bring them to glory. He was not merely to procure for them a possibility of salvation, but to secure for them a full and final salvation; and none that were given to him shall be lost. “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me,” says Christ, “that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”—John. vi. 39.

Section II.—The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof; yet without sin: being conceived by he power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the

manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

Exposition

This section relates to the constitution of the person of the Mediator. In opposition to Socinians and Unitarians, who maintain that Christ was merely a man, and had no existence before he was born of Mary; and in opposition to Arians, who, though they admit the pre-existence of Christ, maintain that he is a creature, and existed prior to his incarnation only as a super-angelic spirit; our Confession teaches, that Christ not only existed before his incarnation, but was from all eternity the Son of God, of one substance, and equal with the Father; and that, in the fullness of time, he assumed a complete human nature into union with the divine, so that he is both very God and very man, having two distinct natures, yet but one person.

I. Jesus Christ not only existed prior to his incarnation, but is the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father. The pre-existence of Christ is confirmed by numerous testimonies of Scripture. That he existed before John the Baptist, is affirmed by John himself, who "bare witness of him," saying, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." John i. 15. That he existed before Abraham is affirmed by Christ himself, who told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am." John viii. 58. That he existed before the flood is evident from the words of the Apostle Peter, who affirms, that by the Spirit Christ "went and preached unto the Spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing."—1 Pet. iii. 19. 20 That he existed before the foundation of the world is no less evident, for the Scripture teaches us that all things were created by him, and in his valedictory prayer he thus expressed himself: "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—John xvii. 5. Christ also declares that he "came down from heaven," and speaks of his ascending up where he was before" (John iii. 15, vi. 62); which clearly imports, that he had a residence in heaven before he took our nature.

We are not left to conjecture what that nature was in which Christ subsisted prior to his incarnation. We are assured that "he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," that "in the beginning was the

Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—Phil. ii. 6; John i. 1. But the supreme Deity of Christ has been established in a preceding chapter, and we shall not now resume that subject. It will be proper, however, in this place, to offer a few remarks concerning the Sonship of Christ. The title of sons of God is applied in Scripture to various orders of beings, but Christ is styled the Son of God in a sense altogether peculiar to himself; hence he is called God's own Son—his proper Son—the only begotten of the Father. His Sonship is not founded upon his mission, nor upon his miraculous conception, nor upon his resurrection, as is supposed by many; but he is the Son of God by an eternal, necessary, and ineffable generation. This truth is confirmed by many passages of Scripture, the application of which to the eternal generation of the Son of God has been vindicated by many learned divines. We can only refer the reader to Ps. ii. 7; Prov. viii. 24, 25; Mic. v. 2; John i. 14. The denial of our Lord's eternal Sonship tends to subvert the doctrine of the Trinity; it also throws a veil over the glory of the work of redemption; for the grace of the second person in becoming incarnate, obeying, and suffering—the love of the first in sending him, and delivering him up to sufferings and death for us—and the infinite value of his atonement, are all in Scripture made to turn upon his essential dignity as the Son of God. We cannot pretend to explain the manner of the eternal generation of the Son; but to deny it upon the ground that it is incomprehensible by us would be preposterous; for, upon the same ground, we might as well deny the subsistence of three distinct persons in one Godhead. Though the eternal generation of the Son be to us an inconceivable mystery, yet of one thing we are certain, that it necessarily implies the Son's equality with the Father. The Jews understood our Lord's claim to Sonship as a claim to equality with the Father, and consequently to proper Deity; and he sanctioned the interpretation which they put upon his words, by declaring, "I and my Father are one." John x. 30, 33.

II. In the fullness of time, the Son of God assumed a complete human nature into union with his divine person. This article of our faith has been opposed by heretics of various descriptions, and the statements of our Confession are intended to meet the heresies which have been broached in different periods.

1. The Son of God took upon him man's nature—a real and perfect humanity. In the primitive times of the Christian Church this was denied by various sects, called Docetae, who held that Christ had not a real, but a mere shadowy body; while others, in later times, affirmed that Christ had a body, but not a soul. But the Scriptures declare that "the Word was made flesh,"—that "God sent forth his son, made of a woman"—and that, "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same." It

would be impossible to find language that could more explicitly assert the reality of Christ's human nature. His apostles, who were admitted to familiar converse with him, were certain that it was not a mere phantom which they beheld, and were as fully persuaded of the reality of his body as of their own. "We have looked upon, and our hands have handled the Word of life."—1 John i. 1. That Christ had a human soil is equally unquestionable. He "increased in wisdom and stature;" the one in respect of his body, the other in respect of his soul. In his agony, he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and on the cross, he committed it to his Father, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commit my sins."

2. Christ was subject to the common infirmities of our nature, but was altogether without sin. He was subject to hunger and thirst, to weariness and pain, and other natural infirmities. On this account, he is said to have been sent into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh."—Rom. Viii. 3. But it was only the likeness of sinful flesh, for he had no sin in reality; hence he is called "the holy one," "the holy child Jesus," and "a lamb without blemish and without spot." The perfect purity of our Lord's human nature was necessary to qualify him for his mediatory work; for if he had been himself a sinner, he could not have satisfied for the sins of others. "such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners."—Heb. vii. 26.

3. The human nature of Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was formed of her substance. The body of Christ was not created out of nothing, neither did it descend from heaven, but was formed, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, of the substance of the Virgin; hence Mary is called the mother of Jesus, and he is called "the fruit of her womb," and "the seed of the woman."—Luke i. 42, 43; Gen. iii. 15.

4. The Son of God assumed the human nature into union with the divine, so that two distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, are inseparably joined together in one person. This is asserted in opposition to certain errors which were broached in the fifth century. The Nestorians held that in Christ, "there were two persons, of which the one was divine, even the eternal Word; and the other, which was human, was the man Jesus." A strong aversion to this error led the Eutychians into the opposite extreme. They taught that in Christ "there was but one nature;" his human nature being absorbed by the divine. That the Godhead and the manhood are united in the one person of Christ, is confirmed by all those passages of Scripture which speak of two natures as belonging to our Saviour.—Isa. ix. 6; Rom. ix. 5; Matt. i. 18. The human nature of Christ never had a separate subsistence or personality of its own, but, from its first formation, was united to, and subsisted in, the person of the Son of God. This

is called the hypostatical or personal union. Though this is an intimate union, yet the two natures are not confounded, but each retains its own essential properties. But, in consequence of this union, the attributes and acts which are proper to one nature are ascribed to the person of Christ. He could only obey and suffer in the human nature, but his obedience and sufferings are predicated of him as the Son of God—as the Lord of glory.—Heb. v. 8; 1 Cor. ii. 8. To represent our Saviour as having a human person distinct from his Godhead, is to divest his obedience and sufferings of their inherent value, and consequently, to subvert the grand doctrine of the redemption of the Church by his blood. It is, therefore, a most important article of our faith, that our blessed Saviour is “very God and very man, yet one Christ.” To this it is subjoined, that he is “the one mediator between God and man.” The Papists would associate saints and angels with Christ in the work of mediation. They allow, indeed, that Christ is the only mediator of redemption, but they allege that there are other mediators of intercession. But the Scripture makes no such distinction; on the contrary, it expressly asserts that there is only one mediator, as there is only one God.—1 Tim. ii. 5.

Section III.—The Lord Jesus in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure; having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell: to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator and Surety. Which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his Father; who put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

Exposition

This section relates to the qualification of Christ for his mediatory work. The Father, who called him to this work, furnished him with all requisite qualifications for its performance. Not only did he “prepare a body for him,” that he might be capable of suffering and dying; he also conferred upon his human nature the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in an immeasurable degree, that he might be thoroughly furnished to execute his mediatorial office. “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”—John iii. 34. In his miraculous concep-

tion, his human nature was formed by the Holy Spirit with initial grace in its highest degree of perfection; and when about to enter upon his public ministry in our nature, to seal his commission, and to qualify him in that nature for his work, the Spirit descended upon him in a bodily shape.—Luke iii. 21, 22.

Section IV—This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake, which, that he might discharge, he was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it; endured most grievous torments immediately in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body; was crucified and died; was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption. On the third day he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered; with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession; and shall return to judge men and angels, at the end of the world.

Exposition

It demands our special attention, that Christ “engaged his heart to approach unto God” as the surety of sinners—not, indeed, of mankind sinners universally, but only of those whom the Father gave to him, and whom he received as his spiritual seed. The present section is closely connected with the preceding, and affirms that Christ willingly undertook the office, not only of a mediator, but also of a surety. A surety is one who engages to pay a debt, or to suffer a penalty, incurred by another. Such a surety is our Lord Jesus Christ. He undertook, in the everlasting covenant, to be responsible to the law and justice of God for that boundless debt which his elect were bound to pay. And having become their surety, by his Father’s appointment and his own voluntary engagement, their guilt was legally transferred to him, and all his obedience and sufferings in their nature were vicarious, or in the room of those whom he represented before God. “Our Lord’s suretyship is denied by the Socinians, who maintain, that he did not suffer and die in our stead, but only for our good; or to confirm his doctrine, and to leave us an example of patience and resignation to the will of God under our suffering. His proper suretyship is also denied by the Neonomians, who maintain, that ‘he only satisfied divine justice for sinners, in so far as it was necessary to render it consistent with God’s honour to enter into lower terms of salvation with them.’ And it is likewise denied by all

those who are opposed to the doctrine of the imputation of our sins to Christ, and are the advocates of a general and indefinite atonement." They may speak of Christ as the substitute of sinners, and of his sufferings as vicarious, but the doctrine of his proper suretyship, which necessarily involves the imputation to him of the guilt of his people, and his endurance of the punishment which they had incurred, can have no place in their system. In Scripture, however, the term surety is expressly applied to Christ.—Heb. vii. 22. And he is not, as Socinians allege, a surety for God, to secure the performance of his promises to us, but a surety to God for elect sinners; and, as such, engaged to pay the debt of obedience which they owed to the law, as a covenant of works, and the debt of punishment which they had contracted by sin. That the sins of his people were imputed to him, is plainly affirmed: "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. liii. 6. It is declared, that Christ suffered, for sins, for the unjust, for the transgressions of his people; which necessarily supposes that he was charged with their guilt.—1 Pet. iii. 18; Isa. liii. 8. All the sacrifices offered by divine appointment, under the legal dispensation, were typical of the death of Christ; but all the legal sacrifices were vicarious—the guilt of the offender was transferred to the sin-offering, which was signified by laying his hands on the head of the victim; and, to show that the type is realised in our Lord's substitution in the room of his people, he is said to have borne their sins in his body on the tree.—1 Pet. ii. 24. It is impossible to account for the sufferings and death of Christ, in consistency with the goodness and equity of God, in any other way than by admitting the doctrine of his suretyship; for, he had no sin of his own, and must, therefore, have suffered in the stead of others, that he might make a proper satisfaction to divine justice for their sins. This alone lays a foundation for the imputation of Christ's satisfaction to his people. He obeyed and suffered as their surety: and, upon this ground, what he did and suffered is placed to their account, and becomes effectual for their salvation.—2 Cor. v. 21. From this it necessarily follows, that Christ suffered and died only for the definite number of our race that were given to him by the Father, unless we embrace the system of universal salvation. If Christ stood as the surety of every individual of the human race, the conclusion is inevitable, either that all mankind must be saved, or that Christ has failed in accomplishing the work which he undertook.

This section further states what Christ did in the discharge of his mediatory office, and that both in his humbled and in his exalted state. In the former state—

1. He was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it. The law under which Christ was made was the moral law, not as a rule of life, but under the

form of a covenant, demanding perfect obedience as the condition of life, and full satisfaction for man's transgression. Christ was not originally a debtor to the law, but he voluntarily came into a state of subjection to it, as the surety of sinners; and he both fulfilled its precept and endured its penalty. All his obedience and sufferings, as the subject of law, were in no respect for himself, but entirely in the stead of his people; and by his service, the law was not merely fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable.—Isa. xlii. 21.

2. He suffered both in soul and in body. His sufferings were various in kind, and extreme in degree. Throughout his life, he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He suffered much from men, not only from avowed enemies, but also from pretended friends, and even from his own disciples. He was also assailed by Satan's temptations. But, besides what he endured by the agency of creatures, he suffered from the more immediate hand of God himself as a rectoral judge. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." As Socinians deny the penal nature of our Lord's sufferings, so they limit them to what he endured through the agency of creatures; but unless we admit that he suffered in his soul from the immediate hand of God, as an offended judge, exacting of him satisfaction for the sins of those whose cause he had undertaken, we cannot account for his dreadful agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and for his bitter lamentation on the cross. He sustained, for a season, the loss of the sensible manifestations of his Father's love, and the awful pressure of God's judicial displeasure on account of sin. This it was that drew from him these doleful complaints: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

3. He was crucified, and died. Death was the penalty of the law, and the just wages of sin; death, therefore, behoved to be endured by the surety of sinners. Though Christ had obeyed the precept of the law, and endured the most exquisite sufferings in the course of his life, yet, had he not submitted to death, all had been unavailing for our redemption. But, "he became obedient unto death;" and the death to which he was subjected was, of all others, the most lingering, the most painful, and the most ignominious, "even the death of the cross." It was also an accursed death; for it was written in the Jewish law, "He that is hanged is accursed of God."—Deut. xxi. 23. A curse seems to have been annexed to this mode of execution, in order to signify beforehand the curse under which Christ lay when he underwent this kind of death.—Gal; iii. 10. His death was violent, in respect of the instrumentality of men, who "slew him with wicked hands;" but, on his own part, it was voluntary. John x. 18. And, let us never forget, that his death was vicarious; for, if it had not possessed this character, we could have derived no higher benefit from his death than from

that of prophets, apostles, and martyrs. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures."—1 Cor. xv. 3.

4. He was buried, and remained under the power of death for a time. Had he revived as soon as he was taken down from the cross, his enemies might have pretended that he was not really dead, and his friends would not have had sufficient evidence that he was actually dead. Therefore, to prove the reality of his death, upon which the hopes and happiness of his people depend, he was laid in a sepulchre, and continued under the power of death for three days and three nights. He was buried, also, to sanctify the grave to his followers, that it might be to them a place of repose, where their bodies may rest till the resurrection.

Let us think of the dreadful malignity and awful desert of sin, which was the procuring cause of the sufferings and death of our Saviour. Let us admire "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." And though it was only in the human nature that he was capable of suffering and dying, let us never forget the dignity of his person. He who was crucified on Calvary, was "the Lord of glory" and when he lay in Joseph's tomb, he was still "the Lord."—1 Cor. ii. 8; Matt. xxviii. 6.

The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; his humiliation was, accordingly, succeeded by a glorious exaltation, that he might receive inconceivable glory for himself, as the reward of his work on earth, and also that he might continue to exercise all his mediatory offices for the good of his Church. The several steps of his exaltation are here enumerated, on each of which we shall offer a few brief remarks.

1. He rose from the dead on the third day. The resurrection of Christ was necessary, that ancient predictions might be fulfilled, and ancient types realised; and, also, that we might be assured of the perfection of that satisfaction and righteousness which he finished upon the cross. His resurrection is a well attested fact. The number of the witnesses was amply sufficient—they could not be themselves deceived, and it is equally incredible that they could intend to deceive others—they gave the best proof men could give that they firmly believed what they testified; for they published the fact at the hazard of their lives, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood. Christ rose with the same body that had been crucified and laid in the grave; this was evinced by its bearing the marks of the wounds which he received by the nails and the spear. John xx. 20. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord, and his resurrection is a source of unspeakable joy to his followers in every age. His supreme Deity was thereby vindicated—his divine mission and the

truth of the doctrine which he taught was fully confirmed—the sufficiency and acceptableness of the sacrifice which he offered up was attested—incontestable evidence was given of his decisive victory over death and the grave—and believers have now a certain pledge and infallible assurance of their joyful resurrection to eternal life.

2. He ascended into heaven. After his resurrection, he continued forty days on earth, that he might afford his disciples infallible proofs of his being alive after his passion, and that he might instruct them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He then ascended from the mount called Olivet, in the presence of his disciples, attended by a glorious retinue of angels, by a local translation of his human nature from earth to heaven, into which he was welcomed by the shouts and acclamations of its inhabitants. Ps. xlvii. 5. He ascended on high, that he might take possession of the glory which he had so justly merited; that he might send down the Holy Spirit in his miraculous gifts and sanctifying influences upon his Church and people; that he might rule, govern, and defend his people, as their exalted king; that he might make powerful intercession for them; and that he might prepare a place for them, and take possession of the heavenly inheritance in their name.

3. He sitteth at the right hand of God. This phrase must obviously be understood in a figurative sense; for God, being a spirit, has no bodily parts. Among men, the right hand is the place of honour and respect, and Christ is represented as set down at the right hand of God, to denote the inconceivable dignity and glory to which, as God-man, he is now advanced, and the sovereign authority and dominion with which he is invested.—Eph. i. 20, 22. His sitting at the right hand of God, implies the perfection of his rest, his security from all adversaries, and the everlasting continuance of his glorious state.—Heb. x. 12.

Is Christ so highly exalted? Then we have no reason to be ashamed of the cross of Christ; for he who “endured the cross is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” We may be assured of the preservation of his Church on earth, and that all the plots of his and her enemies must prove vain devices.—Ps. ii. 1-4. And, as Christ ascended and sat down at the right hand of God, as the head and representative of his people, in his exaltation they may behold the pledge and pattern of their own exaltation.—Eph. ii. 6.

4. He is now making intercession for his people. His intercession consists in his appearing before God in the nature and name of his people, presenting the merit of his atoning sacrifice as the ground of his pleadings in their behalf, and intimating his desire to the Father, in a manner suited to his exalted state, that the blessings which he has purchased for them may be enjoyed by them. He intercedes, “not for the world, but for them which the Father hath given him;”

and he pleads for every one of them particularly, in a suitableness to their diversified circumstances. John xvii. 9; Luke xxii. 32. His intercession is as extensive as the promises of the new covenant, and the blessings which he hath purchased by his death; particularly, he prays that those who are not yet converted may be brought to the knowledge of the truth; that the converted may be preserved in a state of grace, and upheld in the hour of temptation; that their persons and services may be accepted with God; that they may be progressively sanctified; and that they may, in due tune, be glorified. John xvii. His intercession is ever prevalent and successful.—Ps. xxi. 2; John xi. 42. The prevalent efficacy of his intercession may be inferred from the dignity of his person, and the endearing relation in which he stands to the Father. Not only is the advocate dear to the Father, but the clients for whom he pleads are also the objects of the Father's special love.—John xvi. 27. Christ's pleadings in their behalf are always conformable to his Father's will—they are founded upon the sacrifice which he offered up, with which the Father has declared himself well pleased; the Father has also bound himself by promise to grant unto Christ all his requests, and his covenant shall stand fast with him, and his faithfulness shall not fail. This should engage us to love Christ with a supreme affection; it should attract our hearts from earth to heaven, and fit our affections and desires on things above; it should encourage us to "come boldly to the throne of grace;" and it should constrain us to live to Christ, to plead his cause, and promote his interests on earth.

5. He shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world. This is a truth clearly revealed, and fully attested in the Sacred Records. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, foretold it in solemn language.—Jude 14. The Old Testament Scriptures abound with promises of the second as well as of the first coming of Christ.—Ps. i. 3, Act. 13, cviii. 9. The apostles, with one voice, proclaim this truth.—1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 7-9. Angels bear witness to the same truth. Acts i. 11. It is confirmed by the infallible testimony of Christ himself.—Matt. xxvi. 64; Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20. He will come personally and visibly—with great power and glory. The time of his coming, though fixed in the councils of heaven, is to us unknown; but it will be sudden and unexpected, and should be regarded by us as near at hand.—Matt. xxv. 13; James v. 8, 9. The great end of his coming is to judge the world, when he will pronounce the final doom of angels and men, and will consummate the salvation of his people.—Heb. ix. 28.

We should accustom ourselves to frequent and serious thoughts about the coming of our Lord, for it is an event in which we are deeply interested, since "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may

receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." We should occupy our talents till our Lord come, that we may receive from him that best of plaudits—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Let us endeavour to maintain the Christian graces in lively and vigorous exercise, and to be always in a posture of preparation for the coming of Christ—Luke xii. 35, 36. And, let us "abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."—1 John ii. 28.

Section V.—The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

Exposition

This section relates to the ends gained, or the effects accomplished, by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ. It is affirmed—

1. That he hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father. Retributive justice is essential to God, as a moral governor; and the exercise of it, upon the entrance of sin, was indispensably necessary. Christ, as the surety of those whom the Father had given unto him, made a true and proper satisfaction to divine justice, by enduring in their stead the very punishment which their sins deserved. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "He finished transgression, made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."—Heb. ix. 26; Dan. ix. 24; Gal. iii. 13.

"Our Lord's sufferings, as our surety, possessed everything requisite to a true and proper satisfaction for sin; he suffered by the appointment of God, who alone had a right to admit of the death of a surety in the room of transgressors; he suffered in the same nature that had sinned; his sufferings were voluntary and obediential, and therefore possessed a moral fitness for making reparation to the injured honours of the divine law; he was Lord of his own life, and had a right to lay it down in the room of others; and his sufferings were, from the dignity of his person, of infinite value for the expiation of our sins."

That the sacrifice of Christ was fully satisfactory to divine justice, cannot be questioned. An apostle testifies, that the sacrifice which he offered up was "for a sweet-smelling savour unto God."—Eph. v. 2. Christ himself announced that the satisfaction was complete, when, on the cross, he proclaimed, "It is finished." And we have a most decisive proof of the satisfactory nature of his sacrifice, in his resurrection from the dead, and his glorious exaltation in heaven.

2. He purchased reconciliation for his people. This necessarily flows from the former; for if justice is fully satisfied, God's judicial displeasure must be turned away. It is sin which separates between God and sinners; and, therefore, Christ made reconciliation by satisfying divine justice for sin—the cause of the separation. God was not merely rendered reconcilable, but fully reconciled, by the death of Christ. If God were only reconcilable, then some acts of our own must be the proper ground of our reconciliation. But such a sentiment is subversive of the gospels which everywhere declares, that Christ made reconciliation by his death.—Rom. v. 10. From this, however, it will by no means follow, that the elect are in a state of actual reconciliation, either from the time of Christ's death, or from the first moment of their own existence. The Scripture represents them as being "by nature children of wrath, even as others." A sure foundation for their reconciliation was laid by the death of Christ; but they are only actually reconciled to God when, by that faith which is of divine operation, they accept of pardon and peace as obtained by Christ, and freely exhibited to them in the gospel. "We joy in God," says an apostle, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," or rather the reconciliation.—Rom. v. 11.

3. He purchased for his elect an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Christ not only sustained the full infliction of the penalty of the law, to obtain for his people deliverance from condemnation, but also perfectly fulfilled its precept, to procure for them a title to the eternal inheritance. Indeed, his endurance of the penalty, and his obedience to the precept of the law, though they may be distinguished, cannot be separated, and constitute that one righteousness which is meritorious of their complete salvation. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. v. 21. "By Christ's satisfaction," says the accurate Witsius, "deliverance from sin, and all the happy effects of that immunity, were purchased at once for all the elect in general".

SECTION VI.—Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, effi-

cacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent's head, and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, being yesterday and today the same and for ever.

Exposition

This section asserts the efficacy of the death of Christ for the salvation of sinners before, as well as since, he actually laid down his life. Though four thousand years elapsed before he actually appeared in the flesh, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, yet he was exhibited from the beginning of the world, in promises, predictions, and types; and believers under the Old Testament were saved by the merit of his sacrifice, as well as those under the New. Abraham "rejoiced to see his day," and was justified by faith in him. "His death is not more efficacious now, nor will be to eternity, than it was before; for he is the same in point of virtue yesterday, in the ages past, as he is today, at present, and will be in the ages to come."—Heb. xiii. 8. Let us rejoice that his death still possesses the same virtue and efficacy that ever it had; nothing more is required but the application of faith for the communication to us of its fruits and effects.

SECTION VII.—Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes, in Scripture, attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.

Exposition

In opposition to Roman Catholics, who maintain that Christ is mediator only as man, this section asserts that Christ, as mediator, acteth according to both natures. The Scriptures teach us that he acted as mediator prior to his assumption of human nature. It is a mediatorial act—the act of a prophet, to reveal the will of God; and it cannot be questioned that Christ was the author of revelation under the old as well as the new dispensation. It is a mediatorial act to in-

tercede for the Church; but this Christ did long before his incarnation.—Zech. i. 12. And since his incarnation the mediator acts as God-man, and the works peculiar to each nature are ascribed to the person of Christ, in which both natures are united. The human nature alone could suffer and die; yet it is said, "The Lord of glory wan crucified;" and, "God purchased the Church with his own blood."—1 Cor. ii. 8; Acts xx. 28. This claims our special attention; for upon the communion of the two natures in the person of Christ, in all mediatory acts, especially as a surety, the inherent value of his work principally depends.

SECTION VIII.—To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

Exposition

This section relates to the extent of Christ's death with respect to its objects, and in opposition to the Arminian tenet, that Christ died for all men—for those who shall finally perish, as well as for those who shall be eventually saved; it affirms that the purchase and application of redemption are exactly of the same extent. In the fifth section we were taught that Christ purchased redemption only for "those whom the Father hath given unto him;" and here it is asserted, that, "to all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same." It was formerly remarked, that at the period when the Confession was framed, the phrase to purchase redemption was nearly synonymous with the phrase to make atonement for sin. What language, then, could affirm more explicitly than that here employed, that the atonement of Christ is specific and limited—that it is neither universal nor indefinite, but restricted to the elect, who shall be saved from wrath through him?

The sacrifice of Christ derived infinite value from the dignity of his person; it must, therefore, have been intrinsically sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole human race had it been so intended; but, in the designation of the Fa-

ther, and in the intention of Christ himself, it was limited to a definite number, who shall ultimately obtain salvation. This important truth may be confirmed by the following arguments:—

1. Restrictive terms are frequently employed in Scripture to express the objects of the death of Christ: "He bare the sin of many." "He gave his life a ransom for many."—Isa. liii. 12; Matt. xx. 28. Does not this intimate that Christ died, not for all men, but only for many?

2. Those for whom Christ died are distinguished from others by discriminating characters. They are called the sheep, John x 15; the church,—Eph. v. 25; God's elect,—Rom. viii. 33; the children of God.—John xi. 62.

3. Those whom Christ redeemed by his blood are said to be "redeemed from among men" (Rev. xiv. 4), which, if Christ had redeemed all men, would be an unmeaning and inconsistent phrase; they are also said to be "redeemed out of every kindred," &c. (Rev. v. 9), which certainly implies that only some of every kindred are redeemed.

4. The redemption obtained by Christ is restricted to those who were "chosen in him," and whom the Father gave to him to redeem by his death.—Eph. i. 4, 7; John xvii 2.

5. Christ died in the character of a surety, and therefore he laid down his life only for those whom he represented, or for his spiritual seed.—Isa. liii. 10.

6. The intention of Christ in laying down his life was, not merely to obtain for those for whom he died a possibility of salvation, but actually to save them—to bring them to the real possession and enjoyment of eternal salvation.—Eph. v. 25, 26; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Thess. v. 10. From this, it inevitably follows, that Christ died only for those who shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation.

7. The intercession of Christ proceeds upon the ground of his atoning sacrifice; they must, therefore, be of the same extent with regard to their objects; but he does not pray for the world, but only for those who were given him out of the world; his sacrifice must, therefore, be restricted to that definite number.—1 John ii. 1, 2; John xvii. 9.

8. An apostle infers from the greatness of God's love in delivering up his Son to death for sinners, that he will not withhold from them any of the blessings of salvation; we must, therefore, conclude that Christ did not die for all mankind.—Rom. viii. 32.

9. The same apostle infers the certainty of our salvation by the life of Christ, from our reconciliation to God by his death; now, since all are not saved by his life, we must conclude that all were not reconciled by his death.—Rom. v. 10.

10. Christ, by his death, procured for his people not only salvation, but all the means leading to the enjoyment of it; consequently, his intention in dying must be limited to those who do repent and believe, and not extended to the whole human race.

11. The doctrine that Christ died for all men leads to many absurd consequences, such as,—That Christ shed his blood for many in vain, since all are not saved; that he laid down his life in absolute uncertainty whether any of the human race would be eventually saved; that he shed his blood for millions who, at the very moment of his death, were consigned to the pit of everlasting destruction; that he died for those for whom he does not intercede; that he died for those to whom he never sent the means of salvation, yea, to some of whom he even forbade his gospel to be preached,—Matt. x. 5; Rom. x. 14; and that God acts unjustly in inflicting everlasting punishment upon men for those very transgressions for which he has already received full satisfaction by the death of Christ. To affirm any of these things, would be blasphemous in the highest degree, and, therefore, that doctrine which involves such consequences must be unscriptural.

Universal terms are sometimes used in Scripture in reference to the death of Christ; but reason and common sense demand that general phrases be explained and defined by those that are special, and which can only admit of one interpretation. The meaning in each case may usually be ascertained from the context; and one obvious reason for the use of indefinite and universal terms in relation to the death of Christ is, to intimate that the saving effects of his death extend to some of all nations—to Gentiles as well as Jews—to all classes and descriptions of men.