

Father and the Holy Ghost. The second is founded on the former, and belongs to his person, as constituted God-man, and which was to break forth in and upon the human nature united into personal union with him, which glory is thus expressed by one, who was an eye-witness of his majesty, who for himself and others says, "We saw, or beheld, his "glory, the glory as of the only begotten "of the Father". A glimpse of Christ's personal glory shone forth and was seen by the prophet Isaiah. The vision recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy belongs to Christ as God-man, as God personally dwelling in our nature, as is evident from the application of it by the apostle John ^v. "These things "said Esaias, when he saw his (*i. e.* "Christ's) glory, and spake of him." Christ's personal glory broke forth on the holy mount. *Peter* says of himself, *James*, and *John*, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour "and glory, when there came such a "voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I "am well pleased. And this voice which "came from heaven we heard^x."

The apostle Paul gives us a portrait of

^v John i. 14.

^w Ch. xii. 41.

^x 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18.

Christ, God-man, and sets him before us in all his essential, personal, and incommunicable glories, perfections, royalties, and fulness, in his first chapter to the Colossians. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For, by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things, he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." In which scripture we have the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ, which are inherent in him as God-man. *He is the image of the invisible God.* Christ is the complete image of those perfections in the Godhead which are incomprehensible. And they are so in him as to be incommunicable to any mere creature. 2dly. His royalties also are incommunicable, and infinitely transcend all the privileges of any mere creature. *He is the first-born of every creature,* which is not spoken of him as second person in the

Godhead, but as God-man. Christ, as God-man, and all creatures lay enclosed in the eternal decrees and purposes of God. And Christ was brought forth first. Hence he is styled, "The first-born among many brethren^y." That Christ was God-man by predestination appears clearly from the testimony of the apostle Peter, "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world^z."

When Christ is styled, "The first-born of every creature," it is spoken of him, says the incomparable Doctor Goodwin, in consideration of a dignity or birth-right, which the man Jesus Christ united with the second person in the Trinity has above all other creatures. Christ, God-man, is the beginning of the creation of God, and the upholder of the whole creation in his Father's purposes: he was virtually the maker thereof, as so considered; he is the upholder and governor of them, when thus created: and all things in heaven and on earth are committed to him. "The Lord possessed him, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old^a." In the beginning of his ways and works, wherein he purposed to go forth and manifest himself towards creatures in his first thoughts of them, did God possess

^y Rom. viii. 29. ^z 1 Pet. i. 20. ^a Prov. viii. 22.

Christ, as God-man, in his fore-knowledge, as the richest treasure of all his glory to be manifested in the creation; without which he would not have proceeded to any other work, or gone forth into creature-acts. And it is also added; “He possessed me before his works of old^a.” The sentiment here expressed is precisely the same with that of Paul in the text before us. “He is before all things.—The first-born of every creature.” He is the final cause of the whole creation of God. “All things were created by him and for him. He is the head of his body, the church. He is in all things to have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.” Christ’s human nature, assumed into union with the Son of God, is by that union invested with the royal prerogatives of the person with whom it is one. Hence Christ saith, “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself^b” “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead personally, or bodily^c.” So that Christ is *the prince of life—the glory of the Lord—the Lord of glory*. He was the delight of all the persons in the Trinity—the object and subject of their ineffable love—was admitted into

^a Prov. viii. 22.^b John v. 26.^c Col. ii. 9.

all their secrets—possessed by the Father—filled with the fulness of the Godhead by the personal indwelling of the Son, and delighted in by the Holy Ghost, as “The man of God’s right hand, that “Son of man, whom he had made so “strong for himself^d.” The life which the God-man, elect, lived, and the glory and blessedness which he enjoyed with the Father before the world was, are entirely beyond all conception even in Heaven. The Son of God, the person predestinated to wear our nature by personal union, had the glory due to the hypostatical union bestowed on him before the world was. Hence Christ says in the seventeenth of John, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own “self, with the glory which I had with “thee before the world was^e.” This was his personal glory, in which he now shines at the right hand of the majesty on high. A sight of him in which will be the essence of heavenly glory. Hence he saith in the same chapter, “Father, “I will that they also whom thou hast “given me be with me where I am, that “they may behold my glory, which “thou hast given me: for thou lovedst “me before the foundation of the “world^f.” The Father saith of him, “Behold mine elect in whom my soul

^d Psalm lxxx. 17.^e verse 5.^f verse 24

“delighteth^g.” And he saith of the Father, “I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him^h.” And the very fountain, from whence the Father’s delight originated, was his love. “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of “the worldⁱ.” Hence we say, Christ’s election was the fruit of love, as ours is also. The holy Three were so infinitely well-pleased with this union founded in their eternal will and decree, that to make it further manifest, they were pleased to will the loving of an innumerable company of angels and men with an immutable love—to love them *in Christ*, and to love them as they had loved him. As the union of the Son of God with the man Christ Jesus is, next to the union of the divine persons in the Godhead, the most incomprehensible; so it draws after it a truly mysterious and blessed union of the persons of all the elect with the person of Christ, which, like the former, is altogether of *grace*. The union of our nature in the person of the God-man laid the foundation of it. To relieve the mind, whilst an attempt is made to give a clear view of it, I would say, that as Adam in Paradise, though he had God in his works to con-

^g Isaiah xlii. 1.

^h Prov. viii. 30.

ⁱ John xvii. 24.

template, and might thereby be led up to contemplate God in his nature, persons, and perfections, yet wanted a social companion to be a partner with him in his joys and consolations; so, though the God-man, Christ Jesus, was set up in Heaven in the same glory which he would wear for evermore, yet it was conceived in the divine mind, as an increase of his manifestative glory, that he should have a bride, a church, who should be his social companion and a partner with him in all his communicable glory. And like as *Eve* was formed out of *Adam's* rib, and brought, and presented by the Lord God to *Adam*, to be his spouse and a partner with him in his happiness; so the elect were chosen in Christ, received their being, and what they are, as a church, from him, and were presented by the Lord God in the glass of his decrees and purposes to the God-man to be his bride; who were to receive their life, light, holiness, righteousness, blessedness, and glory from him. Here then I would aim to mount the summit, and view the eternal designs of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost towards the elect; and so proceed to give an account of their respective outgoings of love towards them *in Christ*.

It pleased the Eternal Three to love

the elect in Christ Jesus “with an “everlasting love^k.” Their persons were the objects of JEHOVAH’s love, and he expressed his love by choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world. He willed their being and everlasting well-being in *Christ*. He gave them being in Christ by election before all time. The love of God towards them was so great, in all the acts of it towards them, before time and in time, that vast eternity can never fully express it. It is ineffable, incomprehensible, immutable, everlasting love. The first and highest instance of God’s everlasting love towards his people was his giving them being in Christ, which was altogether *of grace*: by which the elect were in Christ united to, interested in, and related to his person. And from this union they have a supernatural influx of his Spirit, communion with him, and communications from him. As Adam, the first man, was the root and representative of all men, and as they were in him by creation, and were to receive their life from him as their head by virtue of their union with him; (hence the apostle saith, “The first man Adam was made a “living soul^l;” because, as the head, he was to convey life to his offspring) so Christ, who is styled in the fore-

^k Jer. xxxi. 3.

^l 1 Cor. xv. 45.

cited chapter the second Man, the Lord from heaven, was the head and representative of the elect from everlasting. He was united to them, and they were united to him, by an indissoluble union. And, like as the three in Jehovah subsisting in one infinite essence was the foundation, or original motive with God of the union of our nature with the second person in deity; so this laid a foundation for an union of the elect with God, and on this it is founded. Hence our Lord thus speaks in the gospel by John, "That they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us^m." God's love to the elect was founded on his love to Christ, God-man. This I think appears from our Lord's prayer to his divine Father, which runs thus, "That the love, wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in themⁿ." It is, as it were, the overflowings of God's love to the person of Christ, which fall upon us. God loved his people from eternity, and beheld them in the person of his Son. He never viewed them out of Christ, nor thought of them but as one with him. Out of the same love, wherewith he loved them, he blessed them with all spiritual blessings in him. And, he being the Son of

^m Chap. xvii. 21.ⁿ John xvii. 26.

his love, whose person was everlastingly dear and acceptable to him, he accepted his people in the person of his beloved; "To the praise of the glory of his "grace^o." Election is an act of pure sovereignty founded on the good-pleasure of Jehovah's will. It flows from and is the fruit of his everlasting love towards his people. It is an eternal act in God—the fundamental cause of all grace and glory. And it is immutable. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for "ever, and the thoughts of his heart to "all generations^p." Christ was set up before all worlds, as the great head of the elect; and they were chosen in him, and together with him. "Of him (*i. e.* "of JEHOVAH the Father) are ye in "Christ Jesus^q." Our existence in Christ, union with him, and interest in him, are founded thereon. Hence our Lord himself makes a great matter of it, and lays a remarkable stress on it in his prayer recorded in the 17th of John, where, in his address to his divine Father, he saith, "Thine they were, and "thou gavest them me." God's grace in election is gloriously set forth with the *supralapsarian* blessings, which follow that supercreation being given us in Christ Jesus, in the first chapter of the

^o Eph. i. 6.

^p Psalm xxxiii. 11.

^q 1 Cor. i. 30.

epistle to the *Ephesians*. The apostle breaks forth saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies, (or heavenly places) in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." In which passage of sacred writ we have a recital of those benefits, which the Father hath bestowed on us in Christ, as he stands related to his church as the eternal head of it. Immutable holiness, adoption, which gives us a title to eternal glory, and immediate communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ are blessings, which flow immediately from our election in Christ, and are supercreation ones, irrespective of all consideration of the fall, and of Christ, as the mediator of reconciliation. All the springs of spiritual and eternal life are in Christ our head. The love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to the elect can never be fully

comprehended. It is the very fountain from whence all the felicity of the glorified flows: and, as the love of the eternal Three to the elect, surmounted and does surmount all thought, so they blessed them with blessings equal to the love, which they bore to Christ the head, and the church his body. Christ, God-man, was a suitable head and husband for his spouse. She was bestowed on him, as the gift of his Father's ineffable love; and was presented in all that holiness, majesty, and glory, with which she will shine forth in Heaven for ever and ever. This view of her attracted the heart of the God-man. He received her into his heart and into his arms, and betrothed her to himself, saying, "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee." As Jehovah willed the manifestation of the glory of his grace to the uttermost, and the good of his people to an inconceivable degree, by admitting them to the closest union and most intimate fellowship with himself, through the God-man as the medium thereof; so in his infinite mind he permitted, and by his own counsel and will predestinated all and every thing, which should befall his people, designing the whole to serve as means of illustrating and manifesting his love in a variety of ways unto his elect, and thereby to in-

crease the glory and praise of his beloved Son.

God chose Christ for himself. He styles him, "Mine Elect[†]." He predestinated the church for Christ; and appointed the world to be *for a season* the place where his people should dwell. Hence saith the apostle, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's[†]."

As JEHOVAH had predestinated *elect angels* (for so they are styled[‡]) and *elect men*, as the objects and subjects, in whom he would shew forth his glorious grace, and designed to manifest in them how intensely he could love them in Christ, even with an immutable love: so it was decreed by him to bring them forth in the respective worlds, which he would create for them, pure and holy in their creature-nature, state, and condition: and he planned two vast designs to be executed on them. He ordained two worlds for them—Heaven for angels, and the earth for men. In these they were for a season to dwell, and by the exercise of his providence towards them he willed to give clear proof and convincing evidence, such as

[†] Isaiah xlii. 1.

[†] 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

[‡] 1 Tim. v. 21.

should most sensibly touch and affect them, what the creature, simply as a creature, was;—how liable to change, and that they were far from having any firm foundation in and of themselves to stand on, even for a moment. The angels were to be created in the heavens. The elect were all to be brought forth by creation, and to stand in one pure head of nature. And by the divine permission of the fall, elect angels and elect men were to see that no creature hath whereof to glory before God. This was to be discovered first to elect angels, by leaving some of those angelic beings, who were equal with them in nature, purity, and excellency, to the mutability of their wills: by which it would appear, “They kept not their first estate,” but left it, fell into sin, and were entirely corrupted thereby. At which time the elect angels would see what they were as creatures, what would have been their case had they been left to the guidance of their own wills, and what would befall them were they left to stand on their own bottom for a single moment. From hence they would be led to apprehend what great GRACE had been freely shewn them in their election and in appointing Christ to be their head; and that they owed their PRESERVATION from falling, to the God-man.

This would lead to a discovery that in its proper season this ineffable blessing would be conferred on them, which was far beyond their due as creatures, and which they could of themselves lay no claim to, *viz.* a sight of the God-man, and such an intellectual view and knowledge of him as would create in their understandings such apprehensions of God's love, goodness and glory manifested in him, as would satisfy their minds and sanctify their wills for ever: which did, when first revealed to them, and still does, and will for evermore, so sanctify their intellectual faculties, and lead them into such communion with the eternal Three, and into such an enjoyment of their goodness, in a way of communication, through the person of the God-man, who is their head^v, as fill them with *all the fullness of God*: so that God in him is their *all in all*. The knowledge and enjoyment of this so immutably fix all their faculties on Jehovah, as he hath manifested the glories of his nature, persons, and perfections in the God-man, that the possibility of their sinning is thereby prevented to eternity. And in a vision of and in communion with the God-man consist their everlasting blessedness and perfection: so that they admire grace, electing grace,

as the fountain and spring of their eternal felicity. The God-man was the foundation of their union with God, and through him they were to receive all divine communications. The revelation of him was to be made known to them, as to us, in a gradual manner. They beheld him with wonder, and celebrated his praise, when he became for a little while lower than they by his incarnation. They saw him when he ascended up into glory^w, and had such a sight of him as increased their love of him and delight in him. When he entered into Heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, they were ready with their song to celebrate his glorious and everlasting praise. “And I beheld,” says John, “and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts (or living creatures) and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing^x.” They love him for loving us; and praise him for that vast expression of it, his washing us from our sins in his own blood. They join in all the worship of the

^w 1 Tim. iii. 16.^x Rev. v. 11, 12.

glorified before the throne, in giving honour and blessing to God and the Lamb.

This world was made for man. On it the Lord God brought forth Adam the first man, as the head of nature to all his offspring. In his loins were contained all the elect of human race, so that they were by creation brought forth in him, as in one pure and holy head; from whom they were to receive their natural being, life, and comfort, which they were by generation to partake of, and in succeeding ages enjoy. It pleased Jehovah to will to leave *Adam*, though perfectly holy by creation, to the freedom and guidance of his own mutable will; by which his mutability would be seen; and that by falling from his state of original purity and happiness, in which he was to be placed by the Lord God, he would involve all his posterity, elect and non-elect, in a state of sin, guilt, and condemnation. Thus they would become exceedingly sinful, their nature being wholly corrupted and entirely defiled by the fall, which would give proof to the human race, as the fall of angels did to the angelic, that the rational creature left in its creature-state, and to the conduct and guidance of its own mutable will, could not continue a single moment in the state and frame,

in which God made man, *viz.* pure, holy, and righteous. This consequently would shew God alone to be immutable, and would prove the creature of itself, merely as a creature, subject to vanity or mutability. And this was to make way for Jehovah to reveal his Christ to elect sinners, as their Saviour; which revelation, as it would most exactly suit their sinful case, would also set forth and manifest with surprising lustre and glory the everlasting love of all the persons in the Godhead towards the elect sinners of mankind, and that in such a manner as could not fail to fill their minds with admiration, and constrain them under views, experiences, and enjoyments of it, to cry out, God is love! “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins^y.” In Jehovah’s exercising his decrees towards angels and men, in the permission of the fall, a way was opened for discovering his eternal designs of grace towards elect angels and elect men. The former were to be raised up far beyond their original state

^y 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10.

by supercreation grace, and admitted to such a sight and knowledge of God, by the beatific vision of him in the person of God-man, as would swallow up their minds in the everlasting contemplation of his blessedness, and make them ineffably blessed in the enjoyment thereof, in which their everlasting happiness would consist, and which would continue them impeccable for ever and ever. The elect of human race, not less favourites of free grace than the former, were to share largely in the blessings of divine favour. They were to have a double share of blessings in consequence of their union with the Son of God. As God's Benjamins, they were to have the upper and the nether springs of everlasting love, grace, and mercy opened for them, and flowing forth towards them. They were to be raised up from and above all the evil and miseries of the fall, and appear "A glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." In the eternal designs of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost towards the elect IN CHRIST, all things were designed to illustrate and exalt the riches, freeness, glory, and sovereignty of grace. The fall itself was as a foil to set it off. The sinfulness and misery of the elect, which they were plunged into, were only designed to glorify the Lord Jesus,

as the head and Saviour of his church and people. By his being their head they were preserved in him, and intitled to all spiritual blessings. By the latter they were to receive their eternal redemption. As sin would draw a veil over, and keep out of sight, the ancient glory in which they shone forth, when viewed by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as presented in the eternal settlements of *grace*, as the bride the Lamb's wife; it was decreed, that Christ, the Lord of glory, should for a little while be made lower than the angels, and experience sufferings and death on the behalf, and for the benefit of his people. He was to lay aside his glory, and because "the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also was likewise to take part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil^z." O the depth of EVERLASTING LOVE! The love of God is one of the deepest mysteries of eternity—the miracle of Heaven—the wonder in glory. Not a saint, nor angel, will ever be able to express or conceive the immensity of it—what it is for God to love his people in *Christ* with an everlasting love; and to be re-iterating the thoughts of it in his own infinite mind from eternity to

^z Heb. ii. 14.

eternity—pleasing himself with, and dwelling with pleasure on, his own knowledge of the love wherewith he hath loved them. This is love which only can be known to God himself. Yet, all this is included and contained in what Jehovah expresses, when he says to his church collectively, and to every member of it individually, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love^a.” God’s love far exceeds and infinitely surmounts all the knowledge and enjoyment, which saints can possibly have of it on earth through the unction of the *Holy Ghost*. And it will for ever and ever infinitely exceed all the knowledge and enjoyment of it, that saints will be favoured with in eternal glory. God, in the person of the Father, hath loved the elect to an infinite degree. Their persons have been the objects of his ineffable love, complacency, and delight before all worlds. Out of his own love, and from hearty good-will and liking unto them, he hath from everlasting bestowed upon them in Christ all spiritual blessings; his heart went out towards them from everlasting. He gave vent to his love; and it was the good pleasure of his will to love them to the uttermost manifestation of it. “To love them with his whole

^a Jer. xxxi. 3.

“ heart and with his whole soul, and to
 “ rejoice over them to do them good^b ”
 “ To rejoice over them with joy. To
 “ rest in his love. To joy over them
 “ with singing^c.” Our Lord, speaking
 of his Father’s love to the elect, says to
 him, “ Thou hast loved them as thou
 “ hast loved me^d.” *O stupendous grace!*
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We have an open proof of it in the
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 ing of his divine Father, “ I was daily
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 “ him, rejoicing in the habitable part of
 “ his earth, and my delights were with
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^b Jer. xxxii. 41.^c Zeph. iii. 17.^d John xvii. 23.^e John xv. 9.^f Gal. ii. 20.

eternal excellency and the glory of Christ; so they expressed their joys in all their mutual love, will, and decrees in Christ towards her. This is a great mystery, which faith alone in the believer as enlightened by the Holy Spirit into a saving knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as made known in the person of the God-man, and through him to the elect, can perceive. For, as the Lord rejoices in his works, surely he must have rejoiced with inconceivable joy in the everlasting love displayed by the sacred counsel and transactions of the divine persons, respecting the good pleasure of their will towards the elect; seeing that through the God-man, the eternal Three will receive everlasting honour, glory, worship, blessing, and praise, to the perfect acknowledgment of their undivided Godhead, from all the saints for ever and ever.—And, art thou, O my soul, enlightened by the Holy Ghost into a scriptural and saving knowledge of these truths? Dost thou know the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; and see the mystery of everlasting love shining forth towards thee, and upon thee in the face of Jesus Christ? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name! Thou mayest by faith view all the love of God breaking forth, in its

full meridian splendour on thee, in the face of Jesus Christ. O holy Spirit, who proceedest from the Father and the Son, descend into my heart, and glorify the Father and the Son, by taking of the things of Christ and shewing them to me, and shed abroad the love of the Father in my heart, and give me a real sense, enjoyment, and experience of the Father's love to me in Jesus. Help me to rejoice in believing that all the benefits of it are enjoyed by faith on earth, and will be enjoyed by sense in Heaven through the immaculate Lamb. Enlighten my mind to apprehend, and quicken my heart to believe, how all the communicable blessings of the Trinity will be enjoyed in beholding Christ's glory, and in immediate fellowship with him. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the incomprehensible Three in the one Jehovah, be eternal praise. Amen.