

creature, as conversion is the motion of the creature to GOD; it is life infused, as conversion is life exerted; it is the law inscribed, as conversion is the law obeyed; it is the image of Christ impressed, as conversion is the image of Christ displayed; it is a divine change, as conversion is that change exhibited; it is a godlike birth, as conversion is a godlike life.

Therefore this work of the new creation is a more astonishing evidence and trophy of the absolute dominion of Christ, than was made in the beginning of time, when he created the heavens and the earth. To crush a world of sinners to atoms, or to dash the creation all to pieces, requires but a small exertion of Christ's divine power: but to enlighten an understanding darker than hell; to bow a will, as obdurate and stubborn as the devil; to humble infernal pride; to demolish innate atheism; to conquer inveterate and malignant infidelity; to eradicate the most virulent enmity to the nature of GOD; to purge out lust and impurity, and infuse the saving knowledge of Christ; to create vital faith; to produce and cherish ardent love to GOD; to plant humility in a proud heart; to suppress rash anger, and infuse meekness; to root out all vile passions, and raise the affections to heaven; to refine the taste, and fix the will for Christ and eternity; to make us hate all that we once loved, and love all

all

all the glorious objects we once hated; to maintain this work begun, in spite of all the world, the devil, and the flesh; and make us victorious at last—is a greater act of dominion and sovereign power, than to preserve a spark of fire alive amidst all the billows of the stormy ocean for ten thousand ages.

9. The sovereign dominion of Christ is displayed, with astonishing glory, in the settlement and fixation of the eternal condition of all the immortal souls that shall ever exist to the end of the world. The reason of this he never gave. The reason of this is improper for a God to give: for if it was fit and proper to be given, he would have done it; therefore, we may be sure it was unbecoming the infinite greatness and dignity of God; and it would have been unsuitable to the veneration and confidence which rational creatures owe to their sovereign CREATOR. He has given no reason but this; that, as the absolute owner and God of the whole earth, he has a RIGHT to do what he will with his own, Matth. xx. 15. Rom. ix. 18.

10. The highest act of Christ's most sublime and astonishing dominion was that which he exerted concerning himself: he did, from an unconceivable eternity, determine, that he would assume a human body and soul into union with
his

his divine PERSON; that he would, in that nature, obey the law in the form of a covenant of works; that he would pay the full price of our redemption with his blood; that he would offer up his body and soul, as a sacrifice, to his Father, the offended monarch, to reconcile us to his divine majesty; and that he would become our surety, and in that character, endure the full punishment of loss and sense, from the divine Father, standing up for the rights of the GODHEAD, and sustaining the character of an inexorable judge. Thus the Lord of glory resolved to be abased as low as a GOD could go; the holy GOD to be made SIN, and the GOD, blessed for ever, be made a CURSE: this was such a tremendous act of the dominion of Christ over his own life, as never can be paralleled in the annals of the universe; and therefore it should seal up our lips in silence, and the most profound subjection and admiration; and keep us for ever from replying against GOD, or censuring his conduct, whilst life and thought, and immortality endure.

USES and INFERENCES from the DOMINION of CHRIST.

1. USE. Never charge the decrees and dominion of Christ with your own or other men's sins. The dominion of Christ, and his wise decrees, establish the freedom of the will; but are
in

in no sense the efficient or impulsive cause of any sin in the world.—Men sin as freely as though there were no decrees or purposes in Christ's wisdom and will.

2. USE. Do not dare to extenuate your blameable actions, by any arguments drawn from the will and decree of Christ.—The infidelity of the Jews, and their wicked rejection and murder of Christ, was no ways lessened by his decree to give himself up to suffer and die.—The unbelief of men is not the less malignant and criminal before God, from God's disposal of their eternal state beyond the grave. It is not on the account of Christ's decree, that they scorn and reject him; but it is entirely owing to the dreadful darkness of their minds, and the desperate enmity and spite of their wills against the person, offices, and grace of the redeemer.

3. USE. The dominion and decrees of Christ are full of instruction and heavenly wisdom; it is the great duty and pleasure of believers to be thoroughly well versed in this truth; and it should animate us to search into it, to consider that the farther we advance in this knowledge, and the more delightfully we contemplate this glorious doctrine, the clearer will be the reasonableness and wisdom of it; and the more richly and abundantly will the usefulness and pleasure of it appear.

Reason

Reason ought humbly to bow to the dominion of Christ; and reason never appears with so much dignity and beauty as when it forms this resolution, " I see clearly that such a truth is revealed by God, and I will believe it, although I am sure I can never comprehend the modus of it." Nothing but the dominion of Christ, heartily submitted to, will ever silence the impudent yelpings and cavils of the carnal and corrupt reason of man.

4. USE. Give Christ the utmost glory of his supreme and eternal dominion, by a free and full subjection to his laws, ordinances, and providences.

1. Submit to his reasonable and wise LAWS. The rules and measures of our temper and conduct are copied from the beautiful nature of God, and they are exactly suited to the nature, powers, affections, and best interests of man. These laws are adapted to the good of the whole world, and yet equally fitted to promote the happiness of every individual on earth. The sovereign dominion of Christ is the first grand reason of our cheerful obedience; but the goodness and bounty of God, and our own best happiness, are to be considered as additional reasons and motives to universal holiness.

2. Be subject to his wise ordinances; every
institution

institution of Christ bears the marks of wisdom, goodness, holiness, beauty, and dominion; prayer and praise; reading and hearing the precious word of God; baptism and the Lord's supper: all these are full of dignity, usefulness, and pleasure; and no man can despise them, till he is arrived to such a pitch of folly and madness as to make a mock at sin, and despise Christ, his own soul, the terrors of death, the glories of heaven, and the torments of hell.

3. Submit to his PROVIDENCES.

The providence of CHRIST is nothing but the exercise of his divine perfections, in all sorts of motions and events in the universe.

He interests himself in all the actions of the natural and moral world; and immediately by his own presence and power, preserves and governs all created beings, according to their various natures, material and immaterial, vegetable and animal, mortal and immortal, rational and angelical.

The proof of his providence arises from ten thousand sources. His giving special mercies and deliverances above and beyond the power of natural laws—his associating natural causes for the relief and benefit of his people in a strange and wonderful manner—his rendering fit and
Y
powerful

powerful means to destroy his people ineffectual, and making weak means for their defence succeed—his turning wicked men from doing ill to his people, by his invisible and silent energy—the doing good or evil to his people has always been rewarded or punished by his providence—the exact agreement and correspondence of the scriptures with his operations shews a providence—the actions and events of his providence fall out in remarkable times of need and danger, and agreeable to the promises; and we have a thousand answers to his people's prayers all thro' the scriptures of God.

The providence of Christ is concerned in the creation and structure of our bodies and souls—in the time and place of our birth—in the stock and family out of which we should spring—in our conversion to God, in the time, manner, and means thereof—in appointing our station and province as to the civil and religious life—in directing all our moral and happy connexions—in making seasonable and suitable provisions for the temporal wants of ourselves and families—in delivering us from artful temptations and in the preventing of sin—in preserving our bodies from ten thousand dangers, or recovering us from danger. The providence of Christ appears in a most striking and delightful manner in giving us
aid

aid and assistance for mortifying our sins, and suppressing the in-dwelling corruption of the heart; as well as promoting the great work of sanctification, and advancing VITAL HOLINESS in the soul.

It is the duty of all true believers to observe the providence of Christ, and reflect on it's various actions to promote our happiness. Christ commands this as his express will and choice: O, my people, remember; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord, Micah vi. 5.—The neglect of Christ's providence is condemned as a provoking crime. They regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands, Ps. xxviii. 5. Isai. v. 12. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, Isai. xxvi. 11. The Spirit of God has fixed notes of attention in the Bible to invite us to observe the providence of Christ. No due praise can be given to Christ for his special acts of favour, if we attend not to his providence. We lose the uses, benefits, and pleasures of the works of Christ towards ourselves and others, if we attend not to them with a devotional frame of heart. 'Tis a vile slight and ingratitude to a good God and Saviour, not to observe his providence. We can never order our prayers suitable to our conditions, if we neglect to observe divine providence,

The MANNER in which we should observe the actions of providence, and the temper with which we should reflect on it's operations.—Recollect all Christ's providences concerning you from first to last, from your birth to this moment; and be as exact and accurate as possible, both intensively, as to the peculiar nature and circumstances of your mercies; and extensively in all the kinds of providential blessings. Have special regard to the words and promises of Christ, which are made good to you by his kind and gracious providence. In all your reviews of providence, eye Christ in every comfort, in every trial, in every trouble and affliction which befalls you. See his tender care, his perfect wisdom, his free good will, his sovereign grace, and his great end in all his operations. Exercise those tempers and affections which his special and various providences call for: in all sad and afflictive events, be humble; yet joy in God your Saviour: never part with your joy in the worst events, because he commands you to rejoice evermore: rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice, although the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be in the vines, Hab. iii. 17. Still mind things invisible and eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. If Christ's providence delay a mercy which you have waited and prayed for, despair not; he will never be a minute too late. Censure not the designs and operations

operations of Christ, but wait humbly and patiently at the feet of your divine master, who will kindly and faithfully perform all things for you, Job xxiii. 14. Pf. lvii. 2.

The ADVANTAGES and PLEASURES of observing the providences of Christ. Thus you will maintain and keep up lively communion with Christ every day : a great part of the pleasures and joys of the divine life arise from the devout observation of providence. This daily attention to Christ's hand will suppress and gradually eradicate the natural atheism of your hearts ; this will be a singular and strong support to our faith, in all future wants and trials. It will afford continual matter of praise and devotion to Christ, which is the work of heaven. A due observation of providence will endear Jesus Christ every day more and more to our souls : as all our right to every blessing arises from our union with him, our adoption into his family, our interest in his satisfaction and righteousness—all our comforts are owing to his daily intercession, and they are the gift of his hand, and sanctified to us by his Holy Spirit ; therefore Christ must be exceedingly precious to all who rightly observe his providential operations. This temper and practice hath a marvellous tendency to melt the heart into ingenuous shame and lively gratitude,—it will
produce

produce and secure inward tranquility and calmness of mind, amidst the changes and distressing events of a vain, vexatious world,—and a wise attention to providence will be extremely useful to advance and improve vital holiness in heart and life. And to crown all, the study and review of providence will be of special use and consolation on a dying bed, and in a dying hour, when we are just on the point of going into the presence of Christ, to review all the care of his providence, from the first moment of our existence, to our entrance into the glory of heaven.

INFERENCES from the PROVIDENCE of the
LORD JESUS.

1. Christ is to be seen, acknowledged, and adored in all that befalls us in life and in death—see much of Christ in every creature, and every creature to be nothing without him; he is all in all in providence and grace.

2. How great is the condescension and care of the Lord Jesus over all good men, in all parts of the world, all round the globe, from pole to pole.

3. Does Christ do all things for you! then you are obliged to do all things for the service, interest, and glory of Christ! Whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all in his name, and for the rich display of his glorious perfections!

4. Does

4. Does Christ perform all things for the best and dearest interests of his people! then distrust him not in new trials and great difficulties; that God who has delivered you in so great a death, and in such dreadful troubles, you may boldly trust in him that he will yet deliver, 2 Cor. i. 10. He will beautify the meek with salvation, Ps. cxlix. 4.

5. Seek to Christ for all things by prayer; never execute any design without him; prayer is an outlet to all trouble, and an inlet to all the joys of salvation, which are unspeakable and full of glory.—See a glorious example of the power of faith and prayer, in professor Frank, in the building the orphan-house, at Halle, in Saxony; the book is entituled *Pietas Hallensis*.

6. In all things study to please Christ, on whom you depend for all things, pertaining to life and godliness! You have nothing but what you have received; and you can have nothing that is good for body or soul for time or eternity, but what you receive out of his infinite fulness, as God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

The SPECIAL and PECULIAR GOODNESS of the PROVIDENCE of CHRIST towards all who love God.

The whole system of providence, and all it's
special

special motions, are ultimately for the good of the church and every individual believer, in every period of time, and in every part of the world. Christ, in all his actions, has certainly some END ; he is infinitely wise ; and wisdom consists in proposing the best and noblest end in all that we do. That is truly Christ's end and intention which his heart is most set upon, and which his soul loves best ; and that is certainly the display of his utmost glory, in the perfect salvation and happiness of his people.

All PROVIDENCE is nothing but Christ's perfections, in truth and fact, acting for the good of the church : and he has done so from the beginning of the world to this very day.

I. REASON. This will appear by an ENUMERATION of all things good and bad.

All GOOD THINGS. The whole universe, it's frame, constitution, and laws—the course of nature in all it's revolutions and seasons—the interests of nations and kings—the gifts and ornaments of men, consisting in wisdom, courage, learning, and science—the gifts, graces, and experiences of all good men—the excellencies of gospel ministers, with all their sermons and expositions of scripture, and their rich devotional talents for prayer and praise—the ANGELS of GOD,
who

who are at the top of creation ; all the highest orders of them attend upon the church ; even armies or hosts of them have been employed to attend upon one good man ; witness Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 1. witness Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 17. The angels have performed many great actions for the servants of God, in all ages ; and they love to be employed in watching over them, and in learning from the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10.

All BAD THINGS shall work together for the good of them that love God. Bad persons shall be over-ruled by the wisdom of Christ, to do his people good—all Satan's devices, all his fraud and rage, all his secret plots and open attacks, shall work for good—all wicked men have been over-ruled to do good to the church ; as you may see in the case of Pharaoh, Jehu, Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, Ahasuerus, Herod, and others—great princes, such as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and many more, have been raised up by Christ to serve his church—some of the Roman emperors, who were pagans, have served the church—and modern kings in Europe, and in England, have been over-ruled to do good to the church—the princes of Germany were made use of by Christ to promote the reformation in the time of Luther—and the history of the church, in all ages, will
Z
furnish

furnish ten thousand facts to confirm this glorious truth.

All BAD THINGS, or evils. Sin or the evil of blame, the evil of affliction, and the evil of punishment.—See Mr. Joseph Bellamy, of New-England, on the wisdom of GOD in the permission of sin; with Mr. Hopkins's sermons, as an appendix and supplement to illustrate Mr. Bellamy.—Christ has over-ruled his people's own sins, and the sins of others, for the good of the church. The evil of afflictions is directed by the wisdom of Christ to the same end. Such are wars or the contentions of kings and nations. The past and present war between us and America shall finally terminate in the glory of Christ, and the good of the church—destroying judgments, plagues, earthquakes, dearths, and famines—divisions and contentions amongst ministers and churches—disputes and controversies in religion are all over-ruled for good, to clear up truth and confound error—the opposition made to the gospel by all sorts of infidels, has done good to the church—the evidences and doctrines of revelation would never have been displayed in so bright a manner, had it not been for the fierce and artful opposition made to them in all ages.

The cruel persecutions of the church have done it good in all ages: and these storms of
rage

rage and cruelty have been as necessary to purify and enlarge the church, as winds, and thunders, and lightnings, to purge the air from pestilential vapours, diseases, and deaths. In all your reading of ecclesiastical history, you should keep in your mind the above reflections, to teach you to admire and adore the wisdom and providence of the Lord Jesus-Christ.—See Collett, Flavel, and Charnock, on Providence; with Millar, on the Propagation of Christianity.

REASON II. GOD our Saviour often prefers mercy to the church, and the care of it above his own concernments of justice. He values his mercy to his friends above the immediate execution of justice on his enemies. He spared the wicked world one hundred and twenty years, whilst Noah was preparing the ark. He said to Lot, I can do nothing till thou art safe, Gen. xix. 22. The angels held the four winds of God's judgments, till the people of God were sealed, Rev. vii. 1.

REASON III. Christ takes peculiar notice of the meanest of his people, and mightily condescends to them; much more of the whole church. It is astonishing to consider that the scriptures mention none of the great men among the heathen, but either as they were instruments of good, or executioners of his displeasure, or the subjects of his people's triumph over them.

Cyrus and Darius are celebrated as their friends; Nebuchadnezzar and the cruel Senacherib, with others, as their scourges: and the kings conquered by Abraham and Joshua, as the subjects of their valour and triumph! The actions of the greatest heroes are only noticed in scripture as they relate to the church; whilst the lowest affairs of his people are related at large, and their very names repeated over and over with a peculiar air of pleasure, as we see in the history of Jacob, Joseph, Gideon, Samuel, David, and others.—See Edwards's History of Redemption, p. 160--166.

REASON IV. Christ often reveals to his people what he will do in the world, as if he seemed to ask their advice. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? Gen. xviii. 17. Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets, Amos iii. 7. I have called you friends, for all things I have made known to you, John xv. 15. He foretold the deluge to Noah—the ruin of the Canaanites to Abraham—and the ruin of the Egyptians to Moses—the fate of the four monarchies to Daniel—and the state of the Roman empire and the church; quite down to the end of the world, to the apostle John.

REASON V. Christ has given the choicest things he has to his people; he has given all he is worth

worth to them, only excepting one thing, and that is his own glory in their salvation. Christ has given the whole world to his people. Thus Abraham is stiled the heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13. And all things are your's, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. All things are for your sakes, 2 Cor. iv. 15. He has given his glorious gospel, his precious promises, and the most bright and wonderful discoveries of thoughts and truths, which were hid in God, from eternal ages, Eph. iii. 9. The covenant of grace is entrusted with the church; and this contains all the riches of the eternal God; and this being a mercy which exceeds all other things in the world, it is therefore comprehensive of all things, as the greater comprehends the less; and that God who gives the greatest things, will surely give the less to his people; he has given us his gospel, and his law; his ministers, sabbaths, and ordinances; his own body and soul; his blood, righteousness, spirit, grace, attributes, and actions; he has given us the secrets of his heart, his bosom thoughts; he hath not dealt so with every nation, Ps. cxlvii. 20. And will he not with himself freely give us all things!

According to the STATE of THINGS, and the OECONOMY settled by Christ in the WORLD and the CHURCH, it must needs be that all providences are for the good of the church.

This

This will gloriously appear from the following considerations.

CONSIDERATION 1.

All the providences of GOD the Redeemer are designed to display his grace to his church. Grace is the free good will of Christ *to us*, and the free good work of his spirit *in us*. All that Christ acts in the œconomy of nature, and in the œconomy of redemption, is designed for this great end, and ordered by his counsel and decree, as their rule. He is head over all worlds, for the good of the church, Eph. i. 22. All things are according to GOD's purpose of glorifying Christ as the head, and for us in connexion with him as his mysterious and spiritual body. And GOD the Father takes the same care of us as he did of Christ; which leads us to observe,

CONSIDERATION 2.

GOD the Father hath given all power of government to Christ, to this very end, for the good of the church; all worlds are put into his hands with this very intention; and Christ pursues and executes his Father's intention every moment, without the least failure or delay; all things are created BY him and FOR him; and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church, Colof. i. 16--18.

CON-

CONSIDERATION 3.

GOD our Saviour, in the church, discovers the glory of ALL his attributes.

There is not one perfection of the Lord Jesus, but what is displayed to the uttermost in the church; there is more of Christ to be seen and known in the church, than in the lofty structure of the world, the starry heavens, or in all the angels of GOD; all his divine attributes, all his human powers, graces, and perfections are made known to his people here below; and he discovers more sympathy towards his church militant than to his church triumphant; and surely we have more need of pity and the compassions of his heart, as we are surrounded with enemies, involved in dangers, and pressed down with trials, temptations, and wants.

Every attribute of Christ will shine out for the relief of his people, according to their various frames, conditions, and wants. His eternity of duration is their portion; his omnipresence is their life and joy; his immutability is the rock of their rest; his living almighty power is their support.

Christ displays, in the church, his boundless knowledge; his infinite wisdom and prudence; his rich and inexhaustible goodness; his tender
mercy,

mercy, and unbounded compassion and sympathy; his spotless holiness, inflexible justice, inviolable truth, sincerity, and faithfulness: he displays his unutterable all-sufficiency to supply all his people's temporal and spiritual wants, agreeably to his promises. In the church you see his infinite BLESSEDNESS and GLORY made known in a light as bright as ten thousand suns. Now, therefore, it must be impossible that all things should not work together for his people's good; for if there is any wisdom or goodness, or grace or holiness, or justice or sincerity, in the Son of God; if his perfections ever were exerted, or if they ever shall be displayed whilst time endures, it must be in the church, which he has purchased with his own blood, and which he will eternally fill with the incomprehensible glory of all his perfections!

This leads us to another glorious TRUTH, which contains the strongest consolation.

CONSIDERATION OR DEMONSTRATION 4.

There is a most peculiar relation and vital union between Christ and his church. This union is illustrated by the best and dearest relations amongst mankind: it is the union of friend with friend—of brother with brother—of father and children—of husband and wife—of head with members—of soul with body—of soul with soul,
for

for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit—a union resembling the relation of his divinity to his most pure humanity—and of being one with the Lord as Christ and his Father are one. The church hath that close and dear relation, and union to God the Saviour, which none in the world have besides. It implies a unity of nature, a union of thoughts, passions, taste, volitions, and actions; with a union of ends in a zealous glorifying God. Our being joined to the Lord, and made one spirit with him, denotes the most intimate and intense union that ever was in the world. It denotes Christ's perpetual presence with us; his agency in us; his consciousness of us in the deepest feelings of the soul; his tender sympathy with us in all afflictions; his attention to every motion of the mind, and thought of the heart; his active care of our most minute concerns and interests; and his deep and keen resentment of all injuries offered to us by our enemies.

The glorious EFFECTS of this UNION with
CHRIST.

The result and consequences of all these glorious unions, are a right to all the strongest cordials of the gospel, and an enjoyment of all the richest blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace. Such are the freest and fullest pardon of sin: complete justification by the righteousness

of Christ—adoption into the family of Christ—peace with God, and peace of conscience—sanctification, and growth in grace—fruitfulness in good works, and a pleasureable acceptance of the fruits of holiness—establishment in their frames, graces, and comforts—support in all their powers, good qualities, and noble actions—with invincible perseverance in grace unto eternal glory. These are the happy effects and glorious consequences of vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.—Read an excellent but unknown book, intitled, *The Doctrine of Union between Christ and the Believer*, 8vo. 1740. by the Rev. Mr. Thomas Flower. Dr. Watts declared this was the best book on union he had ever read, and he left this testimony written with his own hand in the book itself. To which book add the account of the glorious fruits of union, in Boston's *Fourfold State of Man*; with Hervey on union, in *Theron and Aspasio*, letter XII.

1. Christ hath a peculiar love to this very UNION, or intimate RELATION between him and his people.

Christ often mentions this relation with delight, as though he loved to hear the sound of it in his own voice: my vineyard, which is mine, is before me. Thus he speaks *me, my, mine*. The church is always under his eye, and seated
in

n his affection; and Christ is pleased with his propriety in them.

Christ never calls the world, *my world*, though he created it. Sometimes he saith, the earth is mine; but it is either to check the presumption of men, who ascribe that to themselves which is due to the FIRST CAUSE; or to encourage his people in the expectation of deliverance, because all things in the earth are at his command; or to shew his own sufficiency without the services or actions of his people, as when he saith, the earth is mine, and the fullness thereof: but it is never mentioned in such a way, as to discover any pleasure he has in the relation between him and the earth simply considered; but *my vineyard*, *my people*, *my children*, *my jewels*, *my sanctuary*, very frequently all through the Bible; so much does Christ esteem his union with them, and his deep propriety in them.

2. This intense UNION and deep RELATION is prevalent with Christ in the greatest EMERGENCIES, and most pungent DISTRESSES of his people.

The very consideration, that they are *his* people, kindles his affection and enlivens his strength for them. And he said, surely they are *my* people, children that will not lye; so he was their saviour, Isai. lxiii. 8.