

into any particular course of iniquity they might be tempted to indulge: and surely, it would be little less indecent to conclude that his doctrines were rather calculated to gratify evil tempers, and to increase immoral actions, among the professors of Christianity, than to promote piety towards God, and purity of conduct between themselves.

But before we listen to such insinuations, which have too much abounded, and which yet abound, let us consider what those things were that John taught believers in Jesus Christ, in order to counteract the progress of sin, and to promote that piety which God approves.

John had said, that God is light, and that in him is no darkness at all. He had observed, if we say, that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. He had also said, that if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and that
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the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Is it easy, is it possible, to conceive of doctrine more pure, of motives more animating, or of arguments more proper? yet it becomes us to be very cautious, lest we give a wrong turn to any of his words.

When John says, these things write I unto you, *that ye sin not*, we are not to imagine he thought it possible they could, by any means, live entirely without sin. This vain notion neither agrees with the context, the supposition in the text, nor the provision of indemnity against the mischief which is there supposed.—We must distinguish between the body of sin and death in us, which does not depend on our will for its existence, and our indulgence of any of its perverse propensities. St. Paul himself makes this distinction. He said to the believers at Rome, Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. If, said he, ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye,
through

through the SPIRIT, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Indwelling sin in believers, has often been compared to those Canaanites which it was the pleasure of God to leave in the land of promise, to exercise the faith and patience of his peculiar people: and, if the comparison be not pushed too far, it is of admirable use. All illicit alliances with those abominable nations were forbidden; but their best efforts to drive them out were never successful but by the power of God; nor was that intended to be so effectually displayed, that the children of Israel should enjoy uninterrupted rest in an earthly possession. Here lay the trial of their faith. If they were not vigilant, they were always oppressed, and without excuse: but if they were ever so vigilant, they could never completely conquer their detestable opponents.

It becomes us, therefore, to distinguish between our design and the event; between the efforts and the success of our endeavours.

Our

Our design, and efforts must be *not to sin*; though the effect and success, will never in this world, perfectly correspond with our intentions. Should you say, why are we to have such a design, and to repeat such efforts, when we know before-hand, we shall not perfectly succeed? I answer, these perpetual efforts are required of us, because we know that sin, in all its forms, is inimical to God, and to our salvation; to make any truce or league with it, is to be disloyal; but to wage eternal war with iniquity, vouches for our sincerity, is a proof of a good understanding, and will always be attended with that success, and with that satisfaction in our own minds, that the least relaxation from this duty is unable to impart.

Again; when John said, that *God is Light*; he did not talk as a mere philosopher, but spake as John THE DIVINE. He spake of that light in which sinful men may walk; nay, in which they must walk, if ever they walk with God. But this is no other than the light of RECONCILIATION. For, how
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can two walk together, except they be agreed?
Or how can any of us joy in God, if we
have not received the ATONEMENT?

John pursued his purpose in the words that follow his declaration in our text, as well, and as much, as in those which precede it: and indeed, the one led him to the other. For, having said, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, he soon adds, My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: but then, to prevent the progress of iniquity in them, he does not subjoin, And if any man sin, we have an *accuser* before God, who will bring us to condemnation: no, the addition is, And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

This unexpected turn in the words of our text, has offended the self-righteous, and the self-sufficient, in all ages. But they who know themselves, and fear God, are thankful for this argument, and feel its beneficial force.

force. They are persuaded, that the preaching of this doctrine to *believers*, will not make void the law ; and that the publishing of this free grace of God, more effectually wins *them* to forbearance of sin, than any other course that can be taken.

The evidence of this fact is well stated by DOCTOR CRISP*, in his evangelical discourses on the words of my text. The very titles of his sermons raise the believer's expectations ; nor will he, if he can dispense with the stile of them, be disappointed by their contents.

I have always thought it an action that added to the honour of the late DOCTOR GILL, (a man whom I constantly attended from March 1760 to June 1761) that he *edited* the works of DOCTOR CRISP, and the hymns of MR. RICHARD DAVIS. The language of DOCTOR CRISP is inharmonious, and the poetry of MR. DAVIS, very bad ; but as each of these writers were lovers of JESUS CHRIST, and have expressed their concern for his glory, and for the comfort of those

* See his CHRIST ALONE EXALTED, vol. II.

that believe the gospel, in stronger terms than most men living, I mention the care of DOCTOR GILL to preserve their memory, and to shew his regard for such ministers of CHRIST, with pleasure; and, I pray God, I may never be afraid, nor ashamed, to follow, as opportunities occur, his laudable example.

In the close of the *first* of DOCTOR CRISP'S discourses on the words of my text, after having ably proved, that the revelation of grace is no encouragement to sin, the DOCTOR says, "And now, if any person here present, have an evil opinion of the grace of God, as a thing of dangerous consequence, as a licentious doctrine; let them learn from that which has been said, to mend their minds, and correct their judgments; knowing that the Holy Ghost is of another mind; that the revealing of the grace of God is the best way in the world to take men off from sin; so far is it from letting loose the reins to persons to break out into all manner of sinfulness."

II. To that declaration which has thus engaged

gaged our attention, John adds a mournful SUPPOSITION. His words are, *And, if any man sin*; which supposes, not only that every man is liable to sin against God, but the words contain a *concession*, that no man is exempt from the evil of sin.

The context requires this interpretation. For in it, John asserts, If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us. He adds, If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Reason requires the same interpretation: for if Christians, the most eminent of them, confess, they are not exempt from sin in this world, it cannot be thought, that those who are enemies, or strangers to Christianity, are more pure than the followers of Jesus Christ. Yet, in how many places do we read of the imperfections of believers!

It is not only in the context, that John speaks of the imperfection of his brethren. Near the close of this epistle, he says, If any

man see his *brother* sin a sin which is not unto death; (temporal death, in my opinion, is to be understood) he shall ask, saith John, and he (the Son of God) shall give him life, for them that sin not unto death.

Paul supposed the same depravity to exist among Christians. *Brethren*, said he, to the churches in the region of Galatia, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering *thyself*, lest *thou* also be tempted: and, to the church at Thessalonica, he said, Now we exhort you, *brethren*, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men: and, in his second letter to that church, he said, If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an *enemy*, but admonish him as a *brother*.

But the concessions on this *subject*, are too numerous to be introduced in one discourse.

They

They who are best acquainted with human depravity, never, I believe, pretended they were able to live without sin. They know that the law is spiritual; that, to justification, it requires the personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience of them who are under it; that no man has thus obeyed the law of God; but, on the contrary, that all have sinned, and come short of his glory. They are fully persuaded, that he who has once sinned, can have no rational hope of yielding future perfect obedience to the law of God; but they are confident, believers are not under the law, but under grace; that they are complete in Christ, and in him alone; and that they, who never believe in him, are polluted without relief, and must perish without redemption.

It is true, when a sinner receives the atonement, he has peace with God, and expects to grow in grace: but still, it is equally true, that the most eminent Christians are, of all men, the most sensible of indwelling sin, the most suitably affected with it, and far more than others willing to confess, that in their

flesh dwelleth no good thing. Their confessions are sincere, constant, and extended to the iniquity of their holy things. No advance in the divine life prevents their future abasement of themselves in the sight of God, or their still saying to him, If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand!

III. What then is the provision of INDEMNITY against the mischief which is here supposed; against the evil of sin, which the Christian owns is ever present with him, even when he would do good? It is this: *we have an advocate with the Father.*

It is not said barely, there *is* an advocate; but that we *have* one, every one of *us*; not have had, or may have, but *now* have, *ever* have; not an advocate with other *advocates*, but with the FATHER; and that our advocate with him, is Jesus Christ the righteous.—These gracious words, which may be considered as the opening of the fountain for
sin,

sin, and for uncleanness, deserve our distinct and deliberate attention.

I. It is said, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE.

Some have disputed whether Christ is an advocate for any person who does not believe in him ; distinguishing between his intercession and his pleading for his clients ; but there can be no dispute worth our notice, whether any but *believers* can ENJOY this office of his mediation. That he intercedes for *all* his ELECT, and that all who believe in him are properly his clients, and may ever look up to him for deliverance, it is the glory of the gospel to report, it is the believer's duty to assert, and his happiness to know, that when he does this, he cannot be contradicted.

An advocate among men, is a person who is regularly called to plead the cause of another in a court of justice. In every court of justice in this country, there must be, it seems, at least, *three* constituent parts ; the *aëtor*, *reus*, and *judex* : the *aëtor* or plaintiff, who complains of an injury done ; the *reus*,

or defendant, who is called upon to make satisfaction for it; and the *judex*, or judicial power, which is to examine the truth of the fact, to determine the law arising upon that fact, and, if any injury appears to have been done, to ascertain, and by its officers, to apply the remedy.

The learned judge*, from whose commentaries these words are quoted, says, It is also usual, in the superior courts, to have attorneys, and advocates, or counsel, as assistants. He adds, Of advocates, or (as we generally call them) counsel, there are two species, or degrees; barristers, and serjeants. Of the latter, how antient and honourable this state and degree is, the form, splendor, and profits attending it, have been, he observes, fully displayed by many learned writers.

To this ancient and honourable office, there is probably an allusion in our text:—though some have supposed, there is nothing illustrates the matter more than the *residence* of some eminent persons from distant pro-

* BLACKSTONE.

vinces,

vinces, in the courts of great princes, or states, whose business it was constantly to negotiate with them the affairs of those whom they represented, to vindicate them from any unjust aspersions, and to advance their interest to the utmost of their power.*

But, my opinion is, whatever is alluded to in civil life, there is not any thing in the transactions of men which gives us a perfect notion of the advocateship of Jesus Christ. It is a due attention to the *difference* of things which contributes most of all to enlarge and correct the human understanding. In most of those similitudes by which Christ is commended to our attention in the scriptures, it will be found that his pre-eminence is more conspicuous from the implied *disparity* in them, than from the partial agreement.

Our Lord, as an advocate, pleads the cause of penitent sinners to procure their just and complete discharge. Now, there are but two ways by which persons can be acquitted in judgment when charged with any crime. The

* Doctor Dodderidge, on 1 John ii. 1.

one is, by pleading and proving, they are not guilty. The other is, by pleading and proving, that though there is guilt, full satisfaction hath been made. Either of these ways, in a court of *justice*, are sufficient to procure a full discharge. The first of them our advocate does not pursue. No, he acknowledges his clients have committed crimes, and that their offences are without excuse; but, in the second, is the strength of his invincible plea: which is, that though crimes which cannot be defended have been repeatedly committed by his clients, he HIMSELF hath made ample satisfaction; made it, that they might walk in newness of life, and cleave to him, their patron, with purpose of heart.

2. It is said, We have an advocate WITH THE FATHER,

This addition, *with the Father*, is of great force. For it supposes, that our advocate pleads and is heard in that *supreme* court where the decision is final, and from which there can be no appeal.

Further;

Further; these words *with the Father*, remind us of that relation which subsists between him who is JUDGE OF ALL, and him who is our patron in his presence. Just before our Lord left this world, he said to Mary Magdalene, Go to my *brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend to *my* Father and *your* Father, and to *my* God and *your* God. From this relation between the Father and the Son, and those for whom he pleads, what favour may not be expected! Be not afraid: but, as directed, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

It may not be amiss to remark, from the clause which is now before us, that it is evident, the office of an advocate did not *make* Christ the Son of God, and that his intercession doth not *make* his Father gracious. As a Son, our Lord was called to *this* office, and to every *other* in the œconomy of our redemption; therefore, though the love of God is manifested in his mediation, yet by

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THAT we are not to suppose the love of God was produced.

Surely, such an advocate, with such a Father, demonstrates that God is very willing they might have the strongest ground of consolation, and a strong degree of comfort, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them : which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail : whither the fore-runner is for them entered ; even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec.

But, to enjoy this *strong consolation*, we must be careful lest we indulge a criminal conceit, or vicious curiosity.

If we imagine, that with the gospel in our possession we could plead our own cause effectually, without the assistance of our advocate, we shall certainly find this is a vain imagination. By the commission of some unexpected

expected crime, or the omission of some well-known duty, the glare of our self-consequence will sink into shades, our minds will be confused, and our courage fail. In such a situation, were our advocate to give us up, we should be absolutely confounded. Remark the contrast between Judas and Peter. For the latter, Jesus prayed, and his faith failed not. The former he abandoned: and the awful consequence was, he went to his own place.

If, on the other hand, we indulge an intemperate curiosity on the advocateship of Jesus Christ, by so doing we are sure to debase the subject, and to deprive ourselves of that degree of consolation from it, which they who are sober and sound in the faith, are permitted to enjoy.

To enquire minutely *how* Christ executes the office of an advocate with the Father, whether he pleads in the Hebrew language, or in any other; whether he pleads in this position,

position or that; whether at stated periods, or as his own wisdom directs, can answer no good end. We know that his intercession on earth was such as became him in this world, and such as was approved of his Father; and we have reason to believe, that in heaven whatever he doth as our advocate, is so managed as perfectly to correspond with that place which is called the holiest of all.

To be assured that the intercession of Christ is everlasting, and always effectual, is of much greater importance to us than to know what, if it could be known, would not augment our consolation. Let us then be thankful that the scriptures so clearly inform us, that the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel's, and that Christ hath an unchangeable priesthood, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them:

3. It is further said, that our advocate, who
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is with the Father, IS JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.

Here three titles are attributed to our patron, and each of them deserves our notice.

1. He is called JESUS. This is his proper name: and to them that believe, this name is as ointment poured forth. Well it may, for it signifies JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR. When he was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, the angel said, Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Important, arduous task! If we consider the rectitude of the divine nature, and the pollution of our own; the inflexibility of the divine justice, and the atrocity of our crimes, we must despair of salvation, unless we confide in Jesus Christ the righteous. But his oblation, and intercession, open, in the valley of Achor, a door of hope: and by him, if *any* man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

2. Our

2. Our advocate is called **CHRIST**, as well as **Jesus**. This title reminds us that he is the anointed, and promised **MESSIAH**. We have found, said Andrew to Peter, the **Messias**; which is, being interpreted, *the* **CHRIST**. Our patron therefore is every way qualified to discharge his office.

Of the Levitical priesthood, it is said, No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. We are likewise informed, So also, **CHRIST** glorified not himself, to be made an high-priest: but he that said to him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. And, from the same authority, we learn, that when he (the Father) bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath *anointed* thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.—Such was the Messiah promised. Such was Jesus Christ when he appeared in
Judea.

Judea. Such is our advocate in heaven, who is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

3. Our advocate is not only called Jesus, and Christ, but Jesus Christ THE RIGHTEOUS; that is the JUST. By the word justice we may understand, that he is true and faithful to his clients; that he is never weary of his office; nor even by an offence like Peter's to be diverted from it. But the principal thing which seems to be intended by this additional title is, that the righteousness of our advocate is that *alone* which he pleads for our perfect discharge from condemnation. Our whole security from wrath and hell, from sin and death, as well as our whole title to heaven, rests upon IT. If that should fail, we must be confounded; but if that is perfect and everlasting, and is the freest gift of the freest grace, they who cordially rely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, may dismiss their fears, and boldly say, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?

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It is Christ that died ; yea rather, that is risen again ; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

As so much depends on the righteousness of Christ, and as nothing else can stand one moment, in the presence of the vindictive justice of God, it becomes us diligently to consider *what* we are to understand by it, *how* it becomes ours ; and by what *means* it may be enjoyed in this world. But though I could wish to discuss each of these questions, having already trespassed a little on *your* patience, I must conclude.

May it please God to increase our faith in that perfect reconciliation which is in Jesus Christ for the relief of sinners, and in the security we have in his patronage before the throne ! May we so grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him, as to plead his cause with good courage before our fellow men, and ever to prefer his kingdom and glory to our earthly interest ! AMEN !

SERMON