

A
TREATISE
UPON
GROWTH IN GRACE,
AS
BEGUN AND CARRIED ON
IN
FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION WITH THE PERSONS
IN THE GODHEAD—WITH THE FATHER IN HIS
EVERLASTING LOVE, BY FAITH IN THE SON'S
SALVATION, THROUGH THE SACRED TEACHINGS
AND INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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With a Recommendatory Preface
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LONDON.

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ.—2 PET. iii. 18.*

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M D C C C IV.

PREFACE.

THE principal intention of a Preliminary Address is to introduce the reader to a partial acquaintance with the work before him, prior to its perusal, by giving him a distinct, though concise view of its nature and scope, the matter of its composition, and the manner of its execution. But, as the subject, nature, design, and plan of this treatise are clearly and fully stated by the author in a copious introduction, the necessity of a preface seems almost, if not wholly, superseded. Yet, notwithstanding this is my confirmed opinion, as the partiality of friendship has assigned me the office, and imposed upon me the obligation of addressing thee, I will readily, in this instance, sacrifice sentiment to affection, and judgment to duty. However, that I may not detain thee a moment, by unnecessary delay, from so rich an intellectual repast, as the good providence of

God has prepared for thy use in the present invaluable treatise on *Growth in Grace*, I will reluctantly say little on the occasion of its publication, when I could willingly say much. Indeed, to say much on behalf of a performance, whose intrinsic merit is its strongest recommendation, would not only be unnecessary, but superfluous; whilst, on the other hand, to be wholly silent would not only, in my opinion, savour of cold indifference to the subject itself, but amount to an act of positive criminality to the church of Christ. Allow me therefore to say, after a most attentive and critical perusal, that the subject of this work is not only of infinite and unparalleled importance in itself, and of universal concern to the Church of the Great Jehovah, but, that it contains a greater quantity of excellent matter, compressed within the narrow limits of a duodecimo, than is comprized in many large folios. This little vol. presents thee with a table well furnished—a table laden with rich abundance—with rich abundance of the choicest viands, which wisdom has

provided for her guests. Reader, it is my province on the present occasion, as a servant in the royal house, to usher thee into the Guest Chamber, where a spiritual feast is prepared for thy entertainment—a feast infinitely more sumptuous than that of Ahasuerus or Belshazzar—a feast for all the Lord's people—(to use the sublime language of the prophet)

“ A feast of delicacies, a feast of old wines,
“ Of delicacies exquisitely rich, of old wines
“ perfectly refined.”—Is: L. Translation.

Besides, the work is executed with that judgment and ability, which a subject of such importance, depth, mystery, and sublimity demanded, and in a manner which reflects infinite honour on the master, whilst it discovers the servant to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

From the fullest conviction, therefore, of the real merit of this Treatise, I do most cordially and earnestly recommend it to thy *attentive* and *frequent* perusal, firmly persuaded that the blessing of the great Head of the Church, that maketh rich, will

descend and rest upon thee, when occupied in the delightful employ, and cause thee to *grow up as calves of the stall, as willows by the water-courses, as the tree planted by the rivers of water, and as the cedar of Lebanon,—to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and, finally, to grow up into Him in all things, who is the HEAD, even CHRIST.* Fervently praying that my persuasion may be verified in thy happy experience, I subscribe myself, Christian Reader,

Thy sincere Friend and Servant

in the Vineyard of our Lord,

I. NICHOLSON.

Bethnal Green,
Aug. 10, 1804.

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A

TREATISE

ON

GROWTH IN GRACE, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

IN a Treatise on *Growth in Grace, as begun and carried on in Fellowship and Communion with the Persons in the Godhead—with the Father in his everlasting love, by Faith in the Son's salvation, through the sacred teachings and Influences of the Holy Spirit*, it is absolutely necessary that the written word of God should be closely attended to. The *Bible* is a record, testimony, and memorial of the free, rich, and sovereign grace of the holy and essential Three, who exist in the one incomprehensible JEHOVAH, inasmuch as it gives an account of their display and manifestation of it towards and upon the elect in Christ Jesus. The deepest and most profound mystery, which the Lord God hath been pleased to make known

therein, is that, which concerns his essence and personalities. The revelation, which he hath given of himself, leads us to conceive and believe his nature, being, life, and blessedness to be incomprehensible, and his personalities to be essential. "For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one^a." This incomprehensible and essential truth made known by the everlasting gospel, respecting the distinction of persons in the one JEHOVAH, is the foundation of all true, spiritual, and divine worship. Baptism, which is a part of instituted worship, is by Christ's command to be performed, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost^b." In which scripture not only the divine *Trinity* are most expressly mentioned; but also in the order in which they exist co-equally and co-essentially in the Godhead.

In the apostolical benediction, which runs thus, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all^c," the divine Trinity are both acknowledged and worshipped. And, in the *Revelation*, we have a

^a 1 John v. 7.

^b Matt. xxviii. 19.

^c 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

prayer offered up by the apostle John to the whole Trinity, wherein they are addressed according to their œconomical offices, in which they stand related and engaged to us in the covenant of grace.

“ John to the seven churches which are
 “ in Asia; grace be to you, and peace
 “ from him which is, and which was,
 “ and which is to come; and from the
 “ seven spirits which are before his
 “ throne; and from Jesus Christ, who
 “ is the faithful witness, and the first
 “ begotten of the dead, and the prince
 “ of the kings of the earth: unto him
 “ that loved us, and washed us from our
 “ sins in his own blood, and hath made
 “ us kings and priests unto God and his
 “ Father; to him be glory and domi-
 “ nion for ever and ever^d” Amen.

The doctrine of the holy and blessed Trinity is set forth in every part of the inspired volume. It hath its influence on, and gives peculiar lustre to, every truth and doctrine contained therein. It adds distinguished energy, and gives peculiar glory, to the declarations of grace, to the proclamations of pardon, and to the promise of Christ and salvation contained in him. Those acts of grace and outgoings of everlasting love, which the Eternal Three expressed towards the elect, and which are revealed

^d Rev. i. 4, 5, 6.

in the written word, give evidence of their co-equality, co-eternity, and co-existence, in the eternal Godhead. The covenant, which obtained between them on behalf of the elect fore-viewed in their fallen state, is a further testimony of this eternal verity. The holy scriptures are a sacred transcript of this everlasting covenant. The incarnation of the Son of God, his inauguration into his office of mediation, the testimony of the Father saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased^e," and the *visible* descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at the time, "so that John saw and knew "that he was the Son of God^f," are an infallible confirmation of it. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation which supports every article of our most holy faith. It enters deeply into every doctrine of divine revelation. Even its practical godliness is influenced thereby, so that I am bold to say, there is not a prayer, experience, grace, or comfort; no, nor any part of a believer's walk with God, or spiritual warfare, set before us in the book of inspiration, but this great truth concerning the persons in the Godhead, with the interest which they have in the elect, and which the elect have in them, is either expressed or implied therein. The subject con-

^e Mark i. 11.

^f John i. 33, 34.

cerning *Growth in Grace* is strictly and truly experimental. It springs from, and is maintained and carried on by the inward and supernatural operations of the Spirit of God. Yet as his work in the souls of the elect is the immediate fruit of election-grace, and is commensurate with the doctrines of it, and the true counterpart of them; so *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and *the grace of God in truth*, in its original, spring, fountain, and glory, should be laid as the foundation to bear up the whole superstructure.

The Holy Ghost, the third person in the incomprehensible and self-existing essence, is the Lord and giver, the fountain and spring of all spiritual life, and of all spiritual operations in the souls of the elect. In the œconomy of grace he works agreeably to his personal and distinct subsistence from the Father and the Son. Election is most generally in the scripture attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Ghost. "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ^s." In the everlasting covenant the Father appointed all things. The Son was sent

^s 1 Pet. i. 2.

into our world by his incarnation to fulfil his Father's will, and accomplish his vast designs. And the Holy Ghost, who *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*, proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and works effectually within and upon the heirs of glory, bringing them to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth, which is after godliness. So that in a discourse, the intention of which is to exalt the grace of the persons in the everlasting Trinity, for their respective love and eternal designs of mercy towards the elect, DOCTRINE must be the foundation. And faith, as the fruit of it, arising from, and founded on it, must be explained; with the experience produced in the soul thereby. This will be a preparative for shewing in what way, and by what means, the Holy Ghost is pleased to carry on his work, begun in the soul by regeneration, which is evidenced by believing on the Son of God, and increased by communion with the Father and the Son, until he invests the newborn soul with everlasting glory. May the Holy Ghost bless the subject, and make it the means of bringing glory to the Father, the Son, and himself, and of leading believers into distinct communion with them. Grant this, holy Father, for the honour of thy Son Jesus

Christ, to whom, with the Holy Ghost, three co-equal persons in the unity of one incomprehensible GODHEAD, be equal and eternal praise. Amen.

GRACE is a subject of vast extent, and of infinite importance. Election in Christ, redemption by Christ, effectual calling, an actual translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, perseverance in holiness, glorification, and uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in Heaven, with that immutable blessedness, which will accompany the same, are the fruits and effects of it. GRACE therefore is a subject worthy the contemplation of elect angels and saints, who surround the throne of the Eternal Three in glory. And it may most justly demand the study and attention of saints, who are at present in their militant state. If it be asked, what is GRACE? The answer is, the free love of God—his loving some of his intelligent creatures, both angels and men, with an immutable love, and expressing it towards them in a wonderful manner, and to an ineffable degree. It hath been the good pleasure of JEHOVAH to love some of the angels, and some of Adam's posterity, with an everlasting love. As this proceeded from his own immutable will, it is GRACE, or free favour.

The original, therefore, to which elect angels and saints owe all their blessedness, and the fountain, from whence their eternal felicity continually flows, is GRACE—THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF GRACE. Angels and saints are debtors to GRACE. Election is wholly of GRACE. Hence it is called the election of GRACE^h. The angels of God's presence owe their election to GRACE, equally with us. They are styled elect angelsⁱ. God, who is love itself, did within himself devise a way whereby he might make known himself, in his nature, persons, and perfections, to some of his intellectual creatures, in the communications of his love, and in such a manner, as should far exceed what the creature, simply considered in itself, and on its own bottom, could ever partake of. This is most justly styled GRACE—SUPER-CREATION GRACE; and is displayed in God's loving his church and people *in Christ* with an immutable love—in his giving them being and life *in Christ* before all time—in his blessing them *in Christ* with all spiritual blessings, and—in his accepting them *in his beloved* to the praise of the GLORY OF HIS GRACE^k. The union, which subsists between Christ

^h Rom. ix. 5.ⁱ 1 Tim. v. 21.^k Eph. i. 3, 4, 5, 6.

and his people, their relation to him, and his interest in them, are altogether of GRACE. This union is a transcendent one, far beyond the dues of creatureship. It is the foundation of all the communion which CHRIST hath with *them*, and which *they* have with HIM on earth, and in Heaven.

The love also, which Christ bears to his church, is a transcendent love. When speaking of it to his apostles, he saith, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you¹." And in his address to his Father, he saith, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me^m." The communion, which Christ holds with them, is altogether spiritual and divine. He is united to them as their head, and they are in him, as members in an head. In him lies all their eternal blessedness. The Father hath treasured up in him all the blessings of his everlasting love; and they are to receive out of the fulness of him *that filleth all in all* the whole of their salvation in time, and all the blessings of it in eternity. Our Lord speaks of the union between him and his church in this high manner. "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe

¹ John xv. 9.

^m John xvii. 23.

“ that thou hast sent me. And the
 “ glory which thou gavest me I have
 “ given them: that they may be one,
 “ even as we are one; I in them, and
 “ thou in me, that they may be made
 “ perfect in one, and that the world
 “ may know that thou hast sent me, and
 “ hast loved them as thou hast loved
 “ meⁿ.” So that *the grace of God* displayed and manifested to the elect in Christ Jesus is ineffable; yea, incomprehensible. Its original, blessings, fruits, and effects are so great, that we may well cry out, *O the depth!* In the person of the God-man the holy Trinity have shone forth, and displayed GRACE to the uttermost of their manifestative glory, and to the uttermost of the elect creatures' capacity. In the redemption of the elect, and in bringing them to the saving knowledge of God the Father, in the Son, through the eternal spirit, there is a marvellous display of *free, sovereign, rich* GRACE. The whole of the inspired volume is one grand exhibition of it: by which it is fully and freely set before us for our comfort and edification. My design in the following pages being to set the CROWN of CROWNS on the head of FREE GRACE, it will be my study and prayer to the Lord the Spirit,

ⁿ John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

that he may be pleased to teach and guide me throughout the whole subject, and bless the same to the praise of his own name.—I shall give under the title of the chapters the subjects which will be distinctly treated of; and will aim to set forth all that I know, and have been taught of this most blessed subject, as the Lord may be pleased to assist. The substance of the whole will contain God's utmost end in election, which will appear to be a *supernatural union with himself*, and also a *supernatural communication of himself*. The foundation of this union with God will be shewn to lie in the union betwixt the second person in the *Godhead* and our nature; by the assumption of which he became God and man in one Christ: *who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. In him, as thus considered God-man, by personal union of our nature with the Son of God, the image of the invisible God, the whole Trinity have made, and do make the highest manifestation of their essential glory, and communication of blessedness to saints. Hence our Lord saith, "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 °.” Union
 with Christ is founded on eternal elec-
 tion. And every blessing flows upon this
 union. The communion, which we have
 with Christ by faith, is the fruit of it.
 The eternal communion also, which saints
 have with Christ in glory, flows from it.
 God’s end in election is his own glory.
 It springs from his own love. Hence
 he saith, “ I have loved thee with an
 “ everlasting love^p.” Election is the
 first act of God’s love. God does not
 love us because he elected us; but be-
 cause he loved us, therefore he elected
 us in and together with Christ from
 everlasting, and appointed Christ God-
 man to be the head of the whole election
 of grace; in whom he gave them a su-
 percreation-being, and from him they
 were to receive all supernatural blessings
 and benefits. You may view the order
 of God’s decrees respecting Christ and
 his church thus.—1st. God was pleased
 and decreed to go forth into creature-
 communion, that his love to his elect
 might thereby be evidenced 2dly.
 His own glory was his supreme end
 therein. “ For of him, and through
 “ him, and to him are all things, to

° John xvii. 24.

^p Jer. xxxi. 3.

“whom be glory for ever.” Amen^q.
 3dly. His design in election was the manifestation of the glory of his GRACE.
 “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^r.” The second person in the essence existing was predestinated in his person to be God-man, and absolutely first decreed: for we were chosen in Christ^s. Therefore he was chosen first, as the head, in whom the elect were beloved and chosen.
 “Who verily was fore-ordained, (*i. e.*
 “as Christ or God-man) before the
 “foundation of the world, but was manifested (as the lamb slain) in these
 “last times for you, who by him do
 “believe in God^t.”

He was, in his predestination, ordained to be *the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts*—His elect in whom his soul delighted. Christ saith, “I was daily his delight,” and adds, “And my delights were with
 “the sons of men^u.” We were chosen to be Christ’s delight; but Christ was chosen to be, as God-man, the object of the delight of the essential Three. Christ stands in a two-fold relation to

^q Rom. xi. 36.^r Ephesians i. 5, 6.^s Ephesians i. 4.^t 1 Pet. i. 20, 21.^u Prov. viii. 30, 31.

his elect of the human race. He is their HEAD, and also their SAVIOUR. For the illustration of grace, Jehovah willed, that elect angels should see how much they owed to grace to preserve them immutably in the favour of God. The elect angels saw what mere creatures, and how mutable their wills were, by the fall of those angelic beings, who left their first estate. At which time, it is very easy to conceive, election-grace was made known unto them, and they were led to see that they owed their preservation from falling thereto. Just as man, ruined in his own nature by the fall, was informed that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

In the execution of God's decrees the world was created, man made in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, and left to the mutability of his own will. In consequence of which, he fell by temptation, and transgressed. God's law was broken by his sinning immediately against it: by which means sin entered into the world, and death by sin. When man had sinned, then God displayed his great designs of grace—revealed and promised Christ, by whom life and immortality were to be brought to light. Thus, "Grace reigned through
" righteousness, unto eternal life by Je-

“sus Christ our Lord^v.” The election of grace comprehended Christ and his church, which consists of elect angels and elect men. Jesus Christ, as God-man, is the first born of all God’s thoughts, ways, and works. Hence he is styled, “The first born of every creature^w.” If the essential Son of God had not submitted to become incarnate, God had never condescended to have gone forth into creature-acts. The only begotten Son of God, as God-man, was the object and subject of God’s eternal decrees. All was proposed and executed in the intuitive knowledge of him, as “the brightness of the Father’s glory and “the express image of his person.”

The first purpose of God, which was carried into execution, and which was the ground-work of all others that were to follow in successive order, was creation; the putting forth of all things out of nothing into being, as the matter which Jehovah’s decrees were to work upon. This work of creation is expressly attributed to Jesus Christ, as God-man, Col. i. 16. where in the following words, his eternity and omnipotency are asserted. “He is before all things, and “by him all things consist.” It was in the virtual influence of our Lord, as God-man, that the worlds were made.

^v Rom. v. 21.

^w Col. i. 15.

“ Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*.” This work of creation is again ascribed to Jesus Christ, as God-man, in the most direct terms, by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, “ God who created all things by “ Jesus Christ^y.” The church of the elect, whose names are written in Heaven, has an entire dependence on Christ, as God-man. Their being and everlasting well-being are in him. God the Father gave them in election a supercreation-being in him, and he gave them also grace and life in Christ before the world began^z. As Christ stands in a two-fold relation to us, *viz.* in that of an *Head*, and that of a *Saviour*; so those blessings which we have from him, as he is Christ our Lord, are founded on our relation to and union with his person. And the blessings, which we have from him as our Saviour, are the fruits of his most precious bloodshedding. **JESUS CHRIST, GOD-MAN, IS THE FOUNDATION AND CORNER STONE, THE GLORY AND ORNAMENT OF THE WHOLE CREATION. HE IS THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS TO HIS SAINTS—THEIR ALL IN ALL.**

Having now given a general plan of the gospel truths and doctrines, that will be interspersed and drawn forth through-

* Heb. i. 2.

^y Ch. iii. 9.

^z 2 Tim. i. 9.

out the following Treatise, I commit the same to the Reader's own consideration and the Lord's blessing; having no other aim or end in view, but that **CHRIST** MAY BE EXALTED IN HIS GRACE AND GLORY; and that the **THREE IN JEHOVAH** may receive from us, through **JESUS** the **GOD-MAN-MEDIATOR**, the everlasting honour, glory, and praise of being, throughout the whole display of grace, from everlasting to everlasting, **ALL IN ALL. Amen.**



CHAP. I.

Of the eternal designs of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost towards the elect ; with some account of their distinct and respective outgoings of love towards them in Christ Jesus from everlasting.

THE great and incomprehensible God is essentially and ineffably holy, happy, blessed, and glorious. His nature is a fountain of infinite perfection. He is life itself—eternity itself—love itself—blessedness itself. He is the “blessed and only potentate, the king of Kings, and lord of Lords, who only hath immortality^a.” His happiness arises from the knowledge which he hath of his own essential nature, person, and perfections. Nothing can be added unto him: for, “Of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen^b.” From the in-being, society, and mutual converse, held between the eternal Three in the one Jehovah, flows that life of joy and bliss, which belongs to God alone. The essential union between the persons in the eternal Godhead is incommunicable; and the communion,

^a 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

^b Rom. xi. 36.

which they had from everlasting with each other, is incomprehensible. Yet, we may venture to say, their communion consists in the eternal life of the three persons among themselves;—in the common interest and propriety which they have in each other—in reciprocal affection, communication, and enjoyment—in an equal knowledge of each other—in an alternate communication of each other's mind in mutual love and delight, and in their possession of one common and equal glory and blessedness. “The Father loveth the Son^c.” “The Son loveth the Father^d.” And express mention is made of the love of the Spirit by the apostle Paul^e. Our Lord says, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you; all things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you^f.” The name expressive of the incommunicable nature the Lord God claims as peculiarly his own. “That men may know that thou, whose name

^c John iii. 35.^d John xiv. 31.^e Rom. xv. 30.^f John xvi. 13, 14, 15.

“ alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high
 “ over all the earth^g.” And he saith,
 “ I am the LORD, (or JEHOVAH) that
 “ is my name^h. JEHOVAH is the in-
 communicable name exprefive of the
 divine effence. It fignifies the effence
 existing or fubfifting. JEHOVAH is
 the being neceffarily existing of and
 from himfelf with all actual perfection
 originally in his effence. This incom-
 prehenfible and incommunicable name
 is given to the Eternal Three as fub-
 fifting in the infinite effence by the
 feraphim in Ifaiah. “ Holy, holy, holy,
 “ is the Lord of Hostsⁱ.” This name is
 attributed to each of the divine perfons.
 —To the Father^k.—To the Son^l. See
 Ifaiah’s vifion, which is concerning
 Chrift, as appears from John^m. This in-
 communicable name alfo is given him by
 the Pfalmift, by whom his eternity and
 immutability are at the fame time moft
 pofitively afertedⁿ. Moreover, this
 fame incommunicable name is given to
 the eternal Spirit^o. It is well known,
 the word LORD, in the Old Testament,
 when printed in our Bibles in large ca-
 pitals, fignifies JEHOVAH. “ It would

^g Pfalm lxxxiii. 11. ^h Ifaiah xlii. ⁱ Ifaiah vi. 3.

^k Ifaiah xlii. 5, 6. ^l Ifaiah vi. 5. ^m Ch. xii. 41.

ⁿ Pfalm cii. 25, 26, 27. compared with Heb. i.
 10, 11, 12.

^o Jer. xxxi. 33. compared with Heb. x. 15, 16, 17.

be almost endless to quote all the passages of scripture, wherein the name JEHOVAH is applied to CHRIST: let those therefore, who own the scriptures as the rule of faith, and yet doubt his ESSENTIAL DIVINITY, only compare, in the original scriptures, the following texts in the margin^o, and, I think, they cannot miss of a scriptural demonstration, that JESUS is JEHOVAH." So speaks the truly excellent Mr. *Parkhurst* in his Hebrew and English Lexicon. As each of the divine persons is incomprehensibly LORD and GOD, so they have an equal propriety to and in this ineffable name JEHOVAH. The union, in-being, and communion, which subsist betwixt the essential and undivided Trinity, are far beyond, and will everlastingly exceed all created understanding. The eternal Three, who are by essential union *one* in essence, enjoy their life, blessedness, glory, and immortality from the knowledge which they have of that infinite Godhead in which they exist; and in the mutual love, solace, and delight,

^o Isaiah vi. 1—5. with John xii. 41. Isaiah xlv. 24, 25. and Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. with Acts xiii. 39. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. vi. 11. Isaiah xl. 3. with Matt. iii. 1—3. Mark i. 3. Luke iii. 3, 4. John i. 23. Mal. iii. 1. with Mark i. 2, 3. Isaiah xlv. 6. with Rev. i. 17, 18. Joel ii. 32. or iii. 15, 16. with Rom. x. 13.

which they have in each other. Though the divine Trinity have a distinct mode of subsisting in the self-existing essence, yet they are not three, but one God: "The Lord our God is one Lord^p." They are three in person, one in Godhead. "There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one^q." The will of the eternal Three is one. It is the distinct acts of the divine will in each of the divine persons as displayed in the works of creation, providence, and grace, which give evidence of their joint concurrence and distinct operations in the œconomy thereof. The essential life, the infinite blessedness, and glory of Godhead cannot be communicated to creatures. JEHOVAH is the fountain and spring of his own essential and everlasting blessedness. It is in himself without increase or decrease. He lives his own life, works his own will, and fills all worlds, creatures, and things with his immensity. *He is all in all, and he filleth all in all.* It pleased him to will the discovery of his majesty, and to manifest his goodness and glory by the revelation of his nature, personalities, and perfections; so that creatures might partake of a derived and communicated goodness and happi-

^p Deut. vi. 4.

^q 1 John v. 7.

ness from him. God only is good: so says Christ^r. To communicate his goodness moved him to create; and he willed to love his elect, and to communicate himself to them in love and that to the uttermost. All communion depends upon an union. The creature must be one with God, ere it can receive and participate of his goodness in a way of blessedness. The nearer the union is, the greater will be the communion. The highest communication cannot be without the highest union.

Now the highest union with God is that of a creature with one of the persons in the Godhead. It was the will of the essential Three, that the second person in the self-existing essence should unite himself to a rational human nature, and thereby give personality to it, so as to be one person with it. By this designed union, according to the counsel of the holy Three, the only begotten Son of God would be made man, and be God and man in the person of one Christ, who was the anointed or holy one of God—the man, God's fellow—the beloved object and darling of the holy Trinity—the father's elect—the chosen one, in whom his soul delighted; who was to be advanced into fellowship with, and made free in the

society of Trinity. And grace and glory were to be communicated, and bestowed proportionably to the peculiar dignity and inconceivable honour of being thus advanced into personal union with the co-equal and co-essential Son of God. By this vast design, conceived in the infinite mind of Jehovah, of an union with the Son of God and an individual humanity, and by this union being carried into execution, the essential Three have made, and do continue to display the highest manifestation of their glory, and such communications of their love to the man in union with God, as surpass all conception even in glory; and through the God-man to the elect, as by no other way or means could have been displayed. This is *grace* worthy of God; such as can never be fully comprehended; no, not by saints in Heaven throughout the ages of eternity. In the person of God-man it appears in its first and greatest act, shines forth in its utmost splendour, and is discovered in its utmost freeness, sovereignty, and glory.

By this eternal purpose, which was hid in God, Christ, as God-man, *the power of God and the wisdom of God*, was brought forth, and set up in the counsels of the eternal Three, as the first born of all the thoughts, ways, and

works of Jehovah towards all in earth and Heaven. Thus the God-man being anointed, set up, and exalted in the eternal decrees of the divine persons, was possessed by *Jehovah*, as his treasure. Of which we have a most glorious discovery in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs of Solomon, from the 22d to the end of the 31st verse. In which part of the sacred scripture, *Wisdom*, a divine person, saith, “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depths: when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the foundations of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, re-

“joicing always before him; rejoicing
 “in the habitable part of his earth, and
 “my delights were with the sons of
 “men.” The whole of which passage
 belongs to Christ, considered as God-
 man, elect. He shone forth from ever-
 lasting, as the “brightness of the Father’s
 “glory, and the express image of his
 “person.” In whom all the persons in
 the essential Godhead were to shine forth
 for ever and ever. And thus, God, who
 is invisible, *dwelling in that light which
 no man can approach unto, whom no
 man hath seen, nor can see*, hath, by
 his eternal Son’s dwelling personally in
 the humanity assumed by him, made the
 uttermost display of his manifestative
 glory. Hence Christ is styled, “The
 “image of the invisible God,” on ac-
 count of the full manifestation of God-
 head unto us in him. This union of our
 nature with the only begotten Son of
 God is the *great mystery of godliness,
 God manifest in the flesh*, or, God
 dwelling personally in our nature.

Now, as all this was in JEHOVAH’S
 decree from everlasting, and the Son of
 God then existed in the Godhead, as
 the second person in the ineffable es-
 sence; so, on passing the decree in the
 council of the eternal Three, the essen-
 tial *Word* sustained the title, wore the

• Heb. i. 3.

† Col. i. 15.

glory, and bore the name of God-man among and before the Three in JEHOVAH. And as such the holy Three rejoiced in him; saying, *Behold the man is become as one of us.* He was the first and principal object of the Father's love—his elect and chosen one, *in whom,* he saith, “his soul delighteth.”

In the intuitive knowledge of him the Lord God chose his elect in him, and made the world for him; that his glory might appear, and his grace and mercy to his elect bride and mystic body be displayed thereon. It pleased the Father that in God incarnate should all fulness dwell, and that he should be the fountain of nature and grace. He was to wear the crown and have the pre-eminence in all things, in creation, providence, grace, and glory. I would here observe on this most deep and truly sublime subject, that Christ hath a two-fold glory, on which all his other glory, *viz.* of headship, mediation, and relation, as one with his church and people, is founded. On his head are many crowns; and he will wear them with increasing lustre for ever and ever. But the glories, which I shall here hint at, are, first, his underived, independent, essential glory: he being in the God-head co-equal and co-eternal with the

^u Isaiah xlii. 1.