

THE COVENANTER.

APRIL, 1853.

[For the Covenanter.]

THE OINTMENT.

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Song i. 3.—“*Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*”

This is the sentiment of the spouse in commendation of the Beloved. There is an allusion, perhaps, to the oil of holy ointment—“the perfume”^{*}—which Moses was instructed to make, and with which the tabernacle and its vessels, the high priests and the kings, were anointed and consecrated to the service of God. The usual interpretation of this passage confounds the good ointments of the first member with the effects of their effusion upon “his name,” expressed in the second member of the verse, and both are made to represent the graces which adorned the Saviour, and the perfume thereof which was transfused through all his mediatorial functions. But it appears to me that there is something embraced in the text, a substratum of excellence behind all this, which is not elicited by this interpretation. The savour of Christ’s “good ointments” is presented as *the cause* of the fragrance of his name. “*Because of the savour,*” &c. There is an essential excellence in the Beloved which is independent of any unction, which is the substratum of all the graces which adorned his name, the perfume of which rendered fragrant all his acts. Possessed of this excellency, he was qualified to be the Mediator, and to be the recipient of all the gifts and graces which are represented as the effects of his unction by the Spirit. “God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness”—“into thy lips is store of grace infused.” Here lies the foundation, in this essential excellency, of all that appeared wondrous and transcendent in the execution of his mediatorial functions. “Christ is a mediator *by nature*, as partaking of both natures, *divine* and human; and mediator *by office*, as transacting matters between God and man.”[†] As he is divine, he is naturally qualified to mediate, and it is in his complex character as God-man—in the act of uniting the two natures in the one person, that the oil of gladness is infused by the Holy Spirit. “His name” covers his person and natures, thus united and consecrated, as engaged in the work of his mediatorship. It is his essential excellency which pervades the whole, and which, in an ineffable and mysterious manner, incomprehensible by us, is conveyed into his mediatorial acts by the Holy Ghost, as well as the wondrous endowments of the human nature conferred by the same anointing. The combination of his

^{*} Ex. xxx. 22—38.

[†] Waterland.

divine and human excellency in the execution of his mediatorial functions, the substratum of all which is the former, renders his name fragrant, as when Mary anointed his feet with the ointment of spikenard, the odour of which filled the whole house.* His very name is *Messiah, Christ*, the anointed; "JEHOVAH, our righteousness;" *Emmanuel, God with us*; and by the preaching of the gospel there is "manifestation of the savour of his knowledge in every place;"† and itself is called "the savour of life unto life;" "sweet savour of Christ." Because of these transcendental qualities pertaining to his mediatorial person, and transfused into all functions and acts of his mediatorship, do "the virgins love him." All that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and are true to the vows by which they have devoted themselves to God, and not only suffer not their affections to be violated, but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh, these are the virgins that love Jesus Christ and follow him whithersoever he goes.‡

It is a profound, yet delightful theme which this fragrant text suggests for our meditation. Christ's essential excellency infuses a virtue and refreshing fragrance unto his mediatorial functions, which excite into delightful activity the love of the pure members of his church.

What is this essential excellency? The divinity of his person as the Son of God. The full discussion of this sublime doctrine cannot be required in this essay; yet it is important that a comprehensive illustration be presented. There is but one God; but the Scriptures clearly teach that in the one Godhead, or divine nature or essence, there are *three* distinct persons. That the divine nature is not divided, and each person in possession of a part; but that the essence is common to the three, and each person is in possession of the fulness of the Godhead. "There are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."§ We are baptized equally in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.|| *This is the true God.* Christ is the second person, or subsistence in the divine nature. He is the Son; and he is so the Son of God as that no other can be called the Son of God in the same sense. It is by a necessary and eternal generation, so that, as Paul expresses it, he is the express figure or image of the Father's person or substance. He is the Son of God, "because of his own divine nature—he being the true, proper, and natural Son of God, begotten by him before all worlds." Thus he is called his "*own Son*," and his "*only begotten Son*."¶ "His distinct personality and subsistence was by an internal and eternal act of the Divine Being in the person of the Father, or an eternal generation, which is essential unto the divine essence, whereby nothing anew was outwardly wrought or did exist. He was not, he is not, in this sense, the *effect* of the divine wisdom and power of God, but the essential wisdom and power of God himself."**

The true idea is, that he is God's own Son, as he, of all who are called the sons of God, (by creation or otherwise, as angels and men and magistrates,) is alone of the same nature with the Father, in equal possession of the divine essence. In this sense he is the only begotten Son of God. No other son of God has the divine nature; but his transcend-

* John xii. 3.

† 2 Cor. xii. 14—16.

‡ Rev. xiv. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2.

§ 1 John v. 7. Matt. xxviii. 19. || Rom. viii. 3. ¶ John iii. 16. ** Owen.

ent Son has his very nature—hence denominated “the true God”—“God over all”—“the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty”—“the Lord of glory.” Hence of him it is written, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him and for him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” In this view of his essential excellency, Christ is “the brightness of the Father’s glory”—“the image of the invisible God.” This is the foundation of all the merit and the glory attached to his wondrous mediatorial achievements. Deny his divinity, and you deny the true God. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;” for “I and my Father are one.” Here lies “the savour of his good ointments,” which perfumes his name and renders fragrant all his transactions between God and man.

As the essential Son of God, to him belongs infinite wisdom; for he is “the only wise God our Saviour”*—infinite holiness—for he is “the Holy One;”† and infinite justice. “Have nothing to do with that Just One,” was the “warning” by Pilate’s wife. And he is denominated “the Just and the Just One;” and that Just One† whom Paul saw in vision when he was overpowered by the brilliancy of his divine glory; and to him belongs infinite love. “To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” It is an ocean vast as the essence of Deity. None can measure its “breadth” or “length,” or fathom its “depth” or scale its “height.” These are the ingredients of “the savour of his good ointments,” which, in their rich fragrance, are “poured forth” on his mediatorial person, and which fill with their sacred perfume all the acts of his mediatorship.

Let us contemplate, for a moment, the influence of this divine unction upon his mediatorial functions. It qualified the human nature for its mediatorial work. One of the most sublime doctrines of our divine religion is that of the incarnation of the Son of God. “Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.” “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman.”‡ “His conception in the womb of the virgin, as unto the integrity of human nature, was a miraculous operation of the divine power; but the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God in the first instant of its conception, is that which is above all miracles, nor can be designated by that name. A mystery it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of those that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension. The depths of the mystery hereof are open only unto him whose understanding is infinite, which no created understanding could comprehend. All other things were produced and effected by an outward emanation of power from God. He said, Let there be light, and there was light. But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, this constitution of one and the same individual person in two natures, so infinitely distinct as those of

* Jude 25.

† Heb. ii. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Gal. iv. 4.

‡ Acts iii. 14; vii. 52; xxii. 14.

God and man, whereby the eternal was made in time, the infinite became finite, immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, and immortal, is that singular expression of divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity."

"In the expression of this mystery, the Scriptures sometimes draw the veil over it as that which we cannot fully contemplate. Thus in his conception of the virgin, with respect unto this union which accompanied it, it was told her "that the power of the Highest should overshadow her."* A work it was of the power of the Most High, but hid from the eyes of men in the nature of it; and therefore that holy thing which had no subsistence of its own, which should be born of her, should be called the Son of God, becoming one person with him.

"Sometimes it expresseth the greatness of the mystery, and leaves it as an object of our admiration. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." A mystery it is, and that of those dimensions as no creature can comprehend. Sometimes it puts things together, as that the distance of the two natures shall illustrate the glory of the one person. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." What Word was this? That which was in the beginning, which was with God, which was God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made, who was light and life.† The Word was made flesh; not by any change of his own nature or essence; nor by a transubstantiation of the divine nature into the human; nor by ceasing to be what he was; but by becoming what he was not, in taking our nature to be his own, whereby he dwelt among us. This glorious Word, which is God, and described by his eternity and omnipotence in the works of creation and providence, was made flesh, which expresses the lowest state and condition of human nature. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. And, in that state wherein he visibly appeared as so-made flesh, those who had eyes given them from above saw his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. The eternal Word being made flesh, and manifested therein, they saw his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. What heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the least part of the glory of this divine wisdom and grace? So also it is proposed unto us. "Unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful—Counsellor—the mighty God—the Everlasting Father—the Prince of Peace."‡ He is called in the first place Wonderful, and that deservedly. Prov. xxx. 4. That the "mighty God" should be a "child born," and the "Everlasting Father" a "Son given," may well entitle him unto the name "Wonderful."§

It is this fact, mysterious and incomprehensible by us—the uniting the human nature with the Son of God, the eternal Word, so that it became one person with him, that qualifies that nature for its mediatorial work. Whilst this nature remained distinct, yet by virtue of this union it was sustained by the Divine Person, and was enabled to endure infinite wrath, and an infinite value was transfused, like the perfume of a holy ointment, into all its acts; and thus it was that God hath purchased his church with his own blood. The Son of God offered up "himself," his person which was divine, but that person as having in union with it the human nature,

* Luke i. 35.

† John i. 14.

‡ Is. ix. 6.

§ Owen.

which was the victim that bled for our sins. It was in this way only that the finite nature could be qualified to meet the claims of infinite justice executing an inexorable law; the finite was intimately so as to be one person, and indissolubly, united with the infinite.

Thus was Christ qualified for his prophetic ministrations. The mind of God must be revealed to man. There must be a full, infallible, authoritative and effective revelation. Every truth necessary for man to know, in order to be saved, must be revealed; and there must be no mistake or error in that which is made known as truth, and it must proceed from an all-sufficient authority, and have an efficacy with it that it shall penetrate the darkened minds to which it is sent, subdue the stubborn will, and mould and influence the affections and the life. When we contemplate the Saviour as divine—when we behold his glory as the only begotten of the Father—we cannot for a moment doubt his qualifications to make such a revelation. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* He knows the mind of God, and has revealed it, and is qualified, as divine, to send the Holy Spirit, according to the economy of grace, to render his revelation efficient in the illumination and sanctification of the minds of men; to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Were he a mere man, it would be impossible for him to receive, by any arrangement, authority to send the Holy Spirit of truth. Thus a divine virtue pervades all the functions of the mediatorial Prophet.

With equal clearness do we perceive the necessity of the savour of this good ointment in his exercise of the sacerdotal functions. The value of his sacrifice depends absolutely upon this. A finite victim could render no atonement. The sacrifice must be of infinite value. Such a sacrifice humanity alone could not render. Glory to God in the highest. God was manifest in the flesh, and, in this wondrous way, “God hath purchased his church with his own blood.” This sublime mystery we have illustrated. By the union of the human nature of Christ with his divine person as the Son of God, *the person* became united with the sacrifice, which thereby became of infinite value, an adequate price by the perfume of the divine excellency, and thus “Christ, having loved his church, gave himself” (the divine person sustaining the human nature) for it, an offering and a sacrifice to God “for a sweet-smelling savour.”† And who, but the Father’s co-equal Son, could stand without dismay before the throne of the inexorable Judge, and say, as an intercessor, “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory?”‡

By this union of the divine person with the human nature, Jesus Christ was qualified for his regal ministrations. The dominion given him as Mediator is twofold. He is King in Zion, King of nations, and Lord of all. He reigns over the universe. All things are put under his feet. Heaven, earth, and hell constitute his kingdom. No mere creature could exercise dominion—no mere creature could rule the church—could sway the hearts of its members, and make them obedient to the laws of God. Much less could he control the hearts of all men, and accomplish the purposes of heaven in the government of the earth. And what creature could rule the angels? and what man could control the devils? Who

* John i. 18.

† Eph. v. 2.

‡ John xvii. 24.

could control the universe, and execute God's decrees throughout his boundless domain? Who but God himself? And who could be God's vicegerent, but God's own co-equal and co-eternal Son? Did the Lamb receive the sealed book? Did he loose the seals thereof? And is he now conducting—in the administration of the kingdom of Providence—the events concerning the church, and the nations found written in that book, to their full accomplishment? It is because he is "worthy," and competent; because he is Jehovah, the Lord of hosts—the Lord God omnipotent—and hence qualified to reign. Truly, because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name (the anointed Mediator) is as ointment poured forth.

"There is wisdom displayed in the circumstance that the world is governed by general laws, and in the relation of the various substances and laws towards each other. But the plan, as it is devised by divine wisdom, so it requires divine wisdom to execute it. The infinite mind that conceived it, and it alone, can wield it. One trembles at the very idea of the execution of such a scheme being committed to any other than a being whose intelligence and resources are unbounded.

"Yet we may, for an instant, imagine a world so constituted being committed to the government of a being high and exalted, but yet finite, to one of the younger gods of heathen fable, or of the angels of revelation. And when things were first set in motion, it might look as if all was harmoniously planned, and as if every emergency had been provided for. Planet upon planet, and sun upon sun, spring into being, and are peopled by innumerable living creatures, with inanimate objects suited to their nature and character. For a time the laws move on with beautiful regularity; but suddenly, and at some distant point, events come into unexpected contact, and then into violent collision, and results follow which even an arch-angel's foresight could not have anticipated. Evil is now threatened at points where there is nothing to meet it. Laws, beautiful in themselves, are crossed, accelerated, or interrupted by other laws; and consequences follow which the supposed governor of the universe cannot contemplate without horror. Thousands of living beings, in certain parts of the world, are left neglected, or are placed in terrific circumstances, owing to some omission or oversight. Disorder, meanwhile, propagates itself in widening circles; and, beginning in a corner which had been overlooked, it soon spreads, like a wasting disease, to other districts, or to other worlds. The very compactness of the connexion in which all things are bound, serves only to extend the prevailing confusion and misery. The intelligent creation, as they surveyed the advancing disorder, would be confounded and dismayed; and we can conceive that the governor of the world would at last feel himself terror-struck in the survey of his own impotency."* But the divinity of the Mediatorial King prevents such terrific results. He is infinitely able to rule the universe, for He made it, and "by Him it doth consist." As the Son, essentially viewed, he created it, as the anointed Mediator he governs it, and under his almighty administration, confusion and disorder can have no place.

These are the reasons of the virgins' love. Because of the peerless beauty of his person; because of the incomparable fragrance of the graces thence transfused by the operation of the Holy Spirit into the humanity in its union with his person; because of the divine excellency and virtue which pervades all his mediatorial acts; because infinite wisdom, and holiness, and justice, and love, shed their perfume upon all his dis-

pensations to the church, and adorn, with an ineffable glory, his administration of the divine government; because of the inexpressible power and sweetness of his word, which flows from his lips as the anointed prophet, the infinite excellency and merit of his sacerdotal ministrations, and the indescribable splendour that emanates from his throne as the anointed King; and because of the outgoing of his all-pervading savour from his mediatorship, stimulating the hearts of the church's purest and noblest members—by reason of all this, there is a continuous flow of their best affections to Him who first loved them, and for their sakes undertook and accomplished the stupendous work of mediator.

They love him with a supreme love. As there is none so worthy, they yield Him their first and their best affections. They are virgins, and they give Him all their heart. He occupies the throne of their affections. All other objects are kept in a subordinate place. No matter how dear the creature may be, though dear as Isaac was, an only son, yet it will be sacrificed upon the altar of their love to Christ.

Their love for Him is chaste. It is the holiness of Christ which unchains their affections. He is infinitely holy in his person, and of spotless purity in his human nature, "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." These virgins are regenerate and sanctified; and their affections are consequently chaste, and partake of the purity of their object. No low, or base, or selfish motive influences their love. A self-interest they have, their happiness is advanced by their love of Christ; never so happy as when their bosom thrills with the most fervent love; yet this is distinct from a grovelling selfishness which makes a man's self the chief end. The glory of Christ is their chief end, and they love Him chiefly for Himself. Christ has the fulness of their heart. It is a peculiar singleness of love which animates their souls. They love as though they loved nothing besides; as though they hated even father and mother, husband and wife, brother and sister, silver and gold, and all other things which usually engage the affections of mankind. And who can estimate the fervour and strength of their love? Nothing can quench its "fervent heat," "floods cannot drown it." Their heart is a furnace of inextinguishable love. And so strong is this bond which unites them to Christ, and so firmly are they bound by it, that no power can sever it, nothing can effect a separation from its glorious and blessed object. They triumph in their challenge. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or perils, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Are we among the virgins? Or have we, like hundreds, only a name to live, whilst we are dead? Do we live separate from the world, and are we, as chaste virgins, paying our vows in the ways of new obedience, and in all things adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour?

Have we a sense of his divine and mediatorial excellency? Do we see Him in his divine majesty and beauty? in the loveliness of his perfect

humanity subsisting by an ineffable union in the divine person? Do we see the Word tabernacling in the flesh, through which we behold the emanation of a glory—as the glory of the only begotten of the Father? Do we see Him as the pre-eminent prophet, who hath brought to light life and immortality by his gospel—has laid open the bosom of the Father, in the scriptures of truth? The great High Priest, who hath fulfilled all sacrificial types, and hath rendered a full propitiation for our sins, by the sacrifice of himself? The exalted King, who reigns over his church and rules the hearts of his people; who governs the nations, inflicting divine judgments, and overruling, and controlling, and who will give the kingdom under the whole heaven to his saints? Do we see him, as Isaiah saw him, on his glorious throne, as the King, the Lord of hosts—ruling the universe—and the seraphim veiling their faces before him, and rendering him the homage due the King of glory? And do we inhale the fragrance of his good ointments, as the rich savour is poured forth upon his name, so that “his garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia?” Then shall we, with the virgins, the companions of the queen, enter into the palace of this glorious King, and unite in the celebration of his praises for ever and ever. Amen.

[For the Covenanter.]

SCOTS WORTHIES.

A publication, with the above caption, has recently been issued from the press of Robert Carter & Brothers, No. 285 Broadway, New York, 1853.

It *purports* to have been written by John Howie, of Lochgoin. It is ushered in by a life of John Howie and an introduction. In reading these introductory papers, it would be inferred (there being no hint to the contrary) that Lochgoin was the veritable author of the book. The work is brought out with the same good taste which characterizes the productions of that establishment.

It contains a great mass of information—information of which the mass of readers are now lamentably ignorant; and were it, what it claims to be, “The Scots Worthies of John Howie, of Lochgoin,” you would not have heard from me, except in commendation. I am sorry to say, however, that the Scots Worthies of the Messrs. Carter *is not* the Scots Worthies of Lochgoin, but a very different work—different in various respects. How this difference could have occurred, by the press of persons sustaining (and deservedly too) so high a reputation as the Messrs. Carters do among the reading community is not easily accounted for. This is for them to do. I have to do with the fact. If the publishers cannot solve the difficulty, probably the editor could. It is a pity he has not given his name. I have now before me an edition of *the Scots Worthies* published in Leith, Scotland, 1816; printed by and for A. Allardice & J. Ogle, Edinburgh.

In comparing the contents of the edition emitted in Leith and the contents of the one published in New York, I find this palpable discrepancy. In the Leith edition there are twelve names not found in the New York edition. Again, in the New York edition I find six names not to be seen in the Leith edition; that is, the New York edition despatches twelve of the men of Lochgoin, and brings forward six of its own to fill their place. Rather rude treatment of John Howie. How did they