

OF THE NATURE, &c. OF THE SIN OF MAN.

I. The nature of sin: It seems to have been brought on through inadvertency, thoughtlessness, and being off of guard; it began with doubting and disbelief of what God had said; appeared in an inordinate desire after the forbidden fruit; and an unlawful curiosity of knowing more than he did; and in pride, affecting to be as God; at least to be upon an equality with angels.

The nature of it may be learnt in some measure from the names it goes by; it is called sin, and the sin, the grand sin, the first and fountain of all sin among men, Rom. v. 12. It is called a transgression, v. 14; a transgression of the law, as every sin is defined, 1 John iii. 4; a transgression of the covenant, a breach of that; and what is more heinous than covenant breaking? to break covenant with men is a great evil; but to break the covenant with God is a greater still. It is called disobedience, Rom. v. 19, disobedience to the will of God, and to his law; and as obedience to God is well pleasing to him, so disobedience, in any case, is highly resented by him. It is often called the offence, in being, in its nature and in all its circumstances, very offensive to God, and abominable in his sight, as all sin is; and in the last-mentioned places the word used signifies a fall; and hence it is common with us to call this sin the fall of Adam; it being that by which he fell from a state of integrity, honour, and happiness, into an estate of sin and misery.

II. The aggravations of this sin were, the place where it was committed, and the time when, with other things.

i. With respect to place; it was committed in the garden of Eden. Here man was put when he was formed; nor was he cast out of it till after he had sinned, and for that reason: here were all manner of trees for his use; and he was allowed to eat of them all excepting one, which was forbidden him; and not to attend to that prohibition, was great ingratitude to his Creator and Benefactor, who had so richly provided for him: and in the midst of all which plenty he sinned. Had it been in a remote part of the world, or in a desert, where this tree grew, and where scarce anything else was to be had, it would in some measure have extenuated the crime; but in a garden, where he had enough of everything, it was a very aggravated crime; and by how much the less that was which was forbidden him, by so much the greater was his crime in not abstaining from it.

ii. With respect to the time when it was committed; that is, how long after the creation of our first parents. This cannot be precisely determined: some make the time after it too long, and others too short. Some think that the first Adam kept his state of integrity as long as the second Adam lived here on earth; but this is a mere fancy, without any foundation. Some have fancied that he fell on the tenth day of September, and they suppose the creation of the world began with that month; so that as Adam was created on the sixth day, his

standing could be no longer than three or four days; and this is supposed for no other reason, but because the Jews in after times had their grand fast on that day: but that was not for Adam's sin, but their own; and had it been for that, it should have been general, and kept by all mankind, if at all. And others are of opinion that he fell the same day he was created; but the text on which it is founded will not support it, Psalm xlix. 12, since it speaks not of the first man, but of his sons, and those in honour, whose continuance in it is not long; and the word for abideth, or lodgeth, as some choose to render it, signifies often a longer duration than a night's lodging. However, it must be very early that man fell, since the account of his fall is very closely connected with what was done on the first day of his creation; and Satan is said to be a murderer, that is, a destroyer of mankind, *from the beginning*, John viii. 44. Now this was an aggravation of Adam's sin, that he should be guilty of it so soon, having just received his being from God; placed in so happy a situation; and blessed with so much honour, power, and authority, and with so many indulgent favours; he and his consort taking their walks in the garden, no doubt, often sang the praises of their great Creator and kind Benefactor, in tuneful lays, in melodious strains; but, like some of their sons afterwards, soon forgat his works.

iii. The sin of Adam was a complicated one; he sinned against light and knowledge, and when he was in full power to have resisted the temptation; he could neither plead ignorance nor weakness in excuse of his sin; it was the height of ingratitude to his Maker; it was affronting him in the highest degree, by disbelieving his word, and thereby making him a liar; it was intolerable pride, an affectation of deity, or of equality to God; a want of thought, of care, concern, and affection for his posterity, with whose all he was intrusted. In short, it included all sin in it. For the laws of God are so connected together, that he that offends in one point is guilty of all.

Some have laboured to make it appear, that Adam by his sin transgressed the whole Decalogue, or the law of the ten commandments, and no doubt but many, the most, if not all, were broken. Dr. Lightfoot expresses it thus, "Adam, at one clap, breaks both the tables, and all the commandments. — 1. He chose him another God, when he followed the devil. — 2. He idolized and deified his own belly, as the apostle's phrase is; his belly he made his God. — 3. He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not. — 4. He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him. — 5. He dishonoured his Father which was in heaven; wherefore his days were not long in that land which the Lord his God had given him. — 6. He massacred himself and all his posterity. — 7. In his eyes and mind he committed spiritual fornication. — 8. He stole that (like Achan) which God had set aside not to be meddled with; and this his stealth is that which troubles all Israel, the whole world. — 9. He bore witness against God when he believed the witness of the devil above him. — 10. He coveted an evil covetousness, which cost him his life, and all his progeny."

III. The sad effects and consequences of this sin. The account of

what befell Adam after his fall is so short, that much is not to be expected from it; and besides, he was so quickly recovered by the grace of God, and brought to repentance for his sin, and had a better image restored to him than what he had lost; and had so early the revelation of the seed of the woman as a Saviour from this and all other sins; so that the mischiefs that personally accrued to him, are not so manifest; but appear more clearly in his posterity. However, there are so many things said, and hints given, as may lead us plainly to observe some of the sad effects of this sin.

I. A loss of original righteousness followed upon it. God made man upright; but sinning, he lost the uprightness and rectitude of his nature; or the righteousness in which he was created; so that he became unrighteous, nay, full of all unrighteousness; hence it is that there is none of his posterity righteous, no not one. Now this was signified by the nakedness of our first parents, which was immediately perceived by them after their fall; for though it primarily respects the nakedness of their bodies, which was the same before the fall, but then was no occasion of shame to them; but afterwards it was; the reason of which was, because of the loss of their inward clothing the righteousness and holiness of their nature; the want of which, the nakedness of their bodies was now an emblem to them of: and as Adam immediately betook himself to get something to cover himself with, so natural is it for men to seek to obtain a righteousness of their own, to cover their naked souls with; for to be self-righteous is as natural to man as to be sinful: and what men do attain to as a righteousness by their own works, is of no more avail than Adam's fig leaves were to him; cannot cover a man from the sight of divine Justice, nor shelter him from the stormy winds of divine wrath and vengeance; nor justify him in the sight of God; nor entitle him to heaven and happiness, nor introduce him into it.

II. Guilt on the consciences of our first parents presently appeared, and that in an endeavour to hide themselves from the presence of God, among the trees of the garden. Guilt is the consequence of sin in all men; the whole world of Adam's posterity is guilty before God; and this is sometimes intolerable, and nothing can remove it but the blood of Christ. And from this consciousness of guilt, flow shame, fear, and hiding themselves from God; they were ashamed to appear before him; and sin causes shame in every one, more or less, unless hardened, stupefied, and past all sense, and are like those that declare their sin, as Sodom; hence men choose to commit sin in secret, in the dark, that their sins may not be seen; nor do they care to come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Fear followed upon a consciousness of guilt in Adam; I was afraid, &c. as there is in every man more or less, a fearful looking for of judgment and indignation, even in the more audacious; yea, those daring creatures the devils themselves believe and tremble; and through guilt, shame, and fear, Adam hid himself, but to no purpose; there is no fleeing from the presence of God, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike; of what avail could the shade cast by the trees in the garden be to Adam, to hide him from the

all-seeing eye of God? and yet such a notion possesses his posterity; Rev. vi. 15—17.

III. Loss and want of knowledge and understanding, were soon perceived in him. The last instance, of hiding himself, betrays his ignorance and folly, as if the trees in the garden could secure him from the sight and vengeance of the Almighty; instead of gaining the knowledge he unlawfully sought after, he lost much of what he had; hence he is ironically and sarcastically upbraided with it; Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil! and his posterity are represented as foolish, ignorant, and devoid of understanding; *There is none that understandeth*, Rom. iii. 11. Though they may understand natural things and civil things, and somewhat of moral things, though not clearly and distinctly, at least so as to do them; to do good they have no knowledge: but they understand not spiritual things, the things of the Spirit of God, which they neither receive nor know, because they are spiritually discerned. They know not God, so as to glorify him; and much less as in Christ: they know not Christ, nor the way of peace, life, and salvation by him: they know not the Spirit of God, his person, office, and operations; yea, men are as stupid as the beasts of the field, and in some things more so; man is born like a wild ass's colt, and is more ignorant, and less knowing, than the ox and ass, which know their owner; and than birds of passage, which know the time of their coming and going, when men know not the Lord and his judgments.

IV. Our first parents, upon their sinning, were immediately obnoxious to the curse of the law, and it was pronounced on them, along with the serpent; though it is expressed as if it only concerned the body, and temporal things; in which strain run the several curses of the law afterwards; *Cursed shalt thou be in the city*, &c. yet they extend farther, even to the wrath of God on the soul, both here and hereafter; for the curse of the law is no other than the sanction of it, death; and which, as has been seen, is death corporal, spiritual or moral, and eternal; Adam, upon sinning, was at once stripped of the immortality of his body, which God had bestowed on it, and became mortal, subject to diseases, and a corporal death, and so all his posterity; in Adam all die; and a spiritual or moral death seized on all the powers and faculties of his soul; his understanding darkened; his mind and conscience defiled; his affections inordinate; his will biassed to that which is evil, and to every good work lifeless and reprobate until restored by the grace of God; as every man is dead in trespasses and sins, until quickened. And eternal death is the just wages of sin, which is no other than the wrath of God revealed against all unrighteousness, and which comes upon the children of disobedience: and there are none of the sons of Adam but as such, and in themselves, are obnoxious to it; even God's elect are *by nature children of wrath as others*, Eph. ii. 3. This is the grand curse, the flying roll in Zechariah's vision, that goes over the whole face of the earth, and cuts off the sinner on this and the other side; and which the wicked will hear at last denounced on them, Go, ye cursed! But the righteous will be saved from it be-

cause Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, and delivered them from wrath to come.

v. Ejection out of paradise is another thing which followed on the sin of Adam; *So he drove out the man*, Gen. iii. 24. An emblem of that alienation from God, from the life of God, and communion with him, which sin has produced, and which has set man at a distance from God; hence Christ suffered to bring his people near unto him; and by his blood they that were afar off were made nigh unto God. And besides these, there are many others, which are the effects of the sin and fall of Adam; as a general corruption and depravity of all the powers and faculties of the soul, which are all immersed in sin, and full of it; and all the members of the body yielded as instruments of unrighteousness; a propensity and proneness to all that is sinful; a inordinate desire after the lusts of the flesh, and of fulfilling them; a serving of divers lusts and pleasures; a serving lusts as pleasures, being lovers of sinful pleasures more than lovers of God. There is, moreover, a disinclination to all that is good, yea, an aversion to it; a hating the good, and loving the evil; yea, the carnal mind is enmity itself to God, and all that is good; and there is also an impotency, an inability to do that which is good; hence man is represented as without strength, having lost it, and become unable to do any thing that is spiritually good; to which may be added, that sin has brought man into a state of slavery to sin, Satan, and the world; this is what we commonly call the corruption and depravity of nature, the effect of the first sin of Adam. This is the pandora, from whence have sprung all spiritual maladies and bodily diseases; all the disasters, distresses, mischiefs, and calamities that are, or have been, in the world.

OF THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN TO HIS POSTERITY.

HAVING considered the disobedience of our first parents, and the sad effects of it to themselves, I shall next consider the concern their posterity have in it, and how much they are affected by it. There are two things follow on it with respect to them; the imputation of the guilt of it to them, and the corruption of nature derived to them from it.

I shall begin with the first, as being previous to the other, and the foundation of it, and which is expressed in very strong terms, Rom. v. 19; *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*. The apostle is upon the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ; and whereas it might be a difficulty in the minds of some, how any could be justified by the righteousness of another; and he had to do greatly with Jews as well as Gentiles; the former of which might better understand the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; or how all men are made sinners by his sin, than the doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness; he observes, it is as easy to conceive how men may be made righteous by the obedience of