

Jonathan Edwards the Preacher

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Jonathan Edwards' literary output was immense, as B. B. Warfield put it, "Born with a drop of ink in his veins, Edwards had almost from infancy held a pen in his hand."¹ And from that vast corpus of Edwards' manuscripts, this previously unpublished sermon has been selected for this volume for its content on the subject of leadership.

One of the things that becomes very clear very quickly, is that Edwards' sermons, no less than his other writings, are full of living and rich doctrine, and whether this was something he should do or not, whether the sermons would thereby be practical enough, was an issue to which Edwards himself gave serious attention. In his *Miscellanies* Edwards writes,

I used to think sometimes with myself, if such doctrines as those of the Trinity and the decrees are true, yet what need was there of revealing them in the gospel? What good do they do towards the advancing [of] holiness?

Well as Amy Plantinga Pauw noted in her well-researched 2002 study of Jonathan Edwards' thought, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, Edwards proceeded to answer his own question in typically Puritan fashion. "I know by experience," Edwards argued,

How useful these doctrines be. Such doctrines as these are glorious inlets into the knowledge and view of the spiritual world, and the contemplation of supreme things; the knowledge of which I have experienced how much it contributes to the betterment of the heart.²

And as he stated in a later *Miscellany*, since

Duties are founded on doctrines, . . . the revelation we now have of the

¹ B. B. Warfield, "Edwards and the New England Theology," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1912), 712.

² *Miscellany* 181 as quoted in A. P. Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 28.

Trinity, of the love of God, of the love of Christ to sinners . . . make[s] a vast alteration with respect to the reason and obligations to many amiable and exalted duties, so that they are as it were new.³

If this gives us an insight into one aspect of the content of Edwards' preaching, then what can we learn about Jonathan Edwards the preacher himself? There is a poem written by Phyllis McGinley, which has Edwards as its subject. It is an amazing but very mistaken poem, though it expresses very succinctly, as Richard Niebuhr later rightly commented, "the highly popular widespread impression of Jonathan Edwards."⁴ The first part of the poem, which Niebuhr himself quotes says,

Whenever Mr. Edwards spake
In church about damnation
The very benches used to quake
For awful agitation.

But then McGinley continues:

And if they had been taught aright
Small children carried bedwards,
Would shudder lest they meet that night
The God of Mr. Edwards.
Abraham's God, the Wrathful One,
Intolerant of error—
Not God the Father or the Son
But God the Holy Terror!⁵

I say it is mistaken because it is based on a caricature of Edwards and his writings, a caricature which I would argue has as its source the continuing general unwillingness to read Edwards for himself, and a caricature that I have spent much of my scholarly life attempting to correct. At the same time, however, I am not arguing that Edwards' God was not "a sin-hating and a sin-revenging God," because that is a truth which Edwards preaches very clearly. As Edwards himself preaches,

His blood which he spilled, his life which he laid down, was an infinite price because it was the blood of God, as it was expressly called, Acts 20:28. Now upon this account, the price offered was equivalent to the demerit of the sins of all mankind, [and] his sufferings equivalent to the

³ *Miscellany* 343.

⁴ H. R. Niebuhr, "The Anachronism of Jonathan Edwards," in *Theology, History and Culture: Major Unpublished Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 79.

⁵ *Ibid.*

eternal sufferings of the whole world, [of] all mankind.⁶

McGinley was obviously by no means alone in her dismissal of Edwards' unique contribution to our understanding of divine truths. For example, how could it possibly have been the case, that a scholar of the stature of Perry Miller, after having been exposed to the writings of Edwards to such a degree as Miller was, could ever, as Laurence rightly identified in his critique of Miller, interpret Edwards and his Christianity in terms of a naturalistic, empirical philosophy? This is an interpretation that Miller does with such thoroughness that a reader, unaware that Edwards was even a Christian, could come away from Miller's book with his ignorance on that score safely intact!⁷

Edwards too has had more than his fair share of actual detractors, one notable example being Angoff in his *A Literary History of the American People*. It is from this work that come the now infamous words, that Edwards was a pathetic, sickly, angry Puritan, a rabid theologian, the bitterest hater of man the American pulpit had ever seen. Quite simply says Angoff, there was no love in Jonathan Edwards for the human race.⁸

In another work, one with a very misleading title, *Great Revivalists*, one might expect a sympathetic treatment of that subject, but what one actually discovers is that the author must have scoured a dictionary of behavioral disorders. For in his book, Godwin seems to call Edwards every one of them, so Edwards is described as a sadistic, self-tortured, morbid, introvert, half-insane, emotion-defective, psychopathic, spiritual quack.⁹ Godwin seems to have seen his work as some kind of damage limitation exercise. If Edwards has written so much, and if it is all so bad, then he must warn people about him.

Consequently, Godwin sees the Great Awakening as nothing more than mass hysteria, and Edwards as the one who brought fear, terror, suicide, and melancholia to the simple folk of New England. In fact it was a blessing for Godwin that Edwards was forced into solitude to keep him from doing more harm. The irony Godwin obviously misses is that it was really in his enforced solitude at Stockbridge that Edwards produced what is often seen as his most influential pieces.

Those who belong within what we might call the mainstream of those who have assessed the role of Edwards in the Awakenings, do rightfully paint quite a different picture. For many, Jonathan Edwards remains "the most significant theologian of the American awakening,"¹⁰ and again,

⁶ Unpublished sermon: "The Sacrifice of Christ Acceptable."

⁷ D. Laurence, "The Foolishness of Edwards," in *Worldview* 18 (1971), 49.

⁸ C. Angoff, *A Literary History of the American People* (1931).

⁹ G. Godwin, *The Great Revivalists* (1950).

¹⁰ J. L. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought* (Vol. 3; 1975/1986), 288.

“Jonathan Edwards, the greatest theologian of the Awakenings.”¹¹

In 1958, R.G. Turnbull produced his major work, *Jonathan Edwards: Preacher*.¹² It is an analysis of more than one thousand sermons still then in manuscript. He calls them the work of an artist and craftsman and he puts Edwards in the first rank of preachers of all time. By every test, says Turnbull, Jonathan Edwards stands out as one of the most vital and challenging, yet mysterious figures in the life and the work of the Christian Church.

Turnbull was certain that he knew why Edwards had been neglected as a preacher: “Sinners”. It is a reflection upon the church, says Turnbull, that the reputation of one of the quietest and least oratorical of preachers should have been estimated in this way. He rightly calls the judgment unwarranted and unjust. “Sinners” has in fact been called “one of the most effective pieces of hell-fire and damnation rhetoric to come out of the American Puritan period.”¹³

When revival came to New England it did not come at that time with hell-fire preaching as is usually thought. One Sunday, Edwards preached “Sinners” in his home church and nothing untoward is recorded as having happened. However, three months later, Edwards was asked to preach at “unmoved” Enfield. Edwards again used the manuscript of “Sinners,” admittedly a little reworked, but surely not enough to account for the revival that broke out that Sunday and spread across a wide area. No, says Turnbull, it is a token that the Holy Spirit will blow where he will. What has been discovered in research on that famous sermon, is that Hopkins, Edwards’ first biographer, never even mentioned it. In his life of Edwards, S. Dwight did, but only in connection with other pulpit successes of Edwards; in fact, it was not until much later that its present reputation would begin to be built around it. By the late 19th century the tradition of interpreting the sermon as predominantly an occasion for frightening the congregation with threats of hell-fire was well established.

The close of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century have seen no abatement in interest in Edwards; in fact we find ourselves in the midst of a current resurgence. Of those who recognize the unique contribution he has made to theology, there are probably not too many though, who would hold it to the degree that John Gerstner did when he wrote,

I am afraid I am guilty somewhat of the adulation of Edwards that Jean

¹¹ R. T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (1976), 114.

¹² R. G. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher* (1958).

¹³ R. L. Stuart, “Jonathan Edwards at Enfield,” in *American Literature* 48 (1976), 46.

Cadier . . . showed towards Calvin when he was asked whether he thought Calvin was infallible. He answered that he was sure Calvin was not infallible, but he could not detect an instance of his fallibility.”¹⁴

However, there was an interesting book, *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of Revival*, written by the pastor and British Member of Parliament, Ian Paisley, which was also very honoring to Edwards. He condemns those he refers to as the “super intellects of contemporary America, who are so eager to claim Edwards as the greatest thinker and philosopher of colonial New England and yet not only reject but reprobate the faith of Edwards.” Paisley argues that they will give credence to anything about him, but his belief in an infallible Bible and the consequence of that belief in his conforming behavior to biblical precepts.¹⁵

He is not slow either, to identify how such thinking has arisen. He says that with the coming of infidelity in the form of evolution, higher criticism, and what he refers to as falsely so-called modernism, Edwards has been attacked “with a venom easily discerned as satanic.” It happened whilst he was alive and it will continue to occur as long as Christ and His servants are hated, argues Paisley.¹⁶

McGinley was also mistaken because it is a caricature that is very far from the truth, an assessment that L. I. Sweet also agreed with in his article.¹⁷ Sweet argues that Edwards is too often portrayed as a clenched-teethed apostle whose spit-fire sermons skewered sinners with the threatenings of a spine-chilling God, and who is at the same time, incapable of writing one humorous sentence; that the last thing one expects to find in Edwards is rollicking good humor. Sweet believes such images tell us more about ourselves than they do about Jonathan Edwards. The first part of our problem, said Sweet, is that Edwards is too large for “ordinary measuring rods.” For the truth, argues Sweet, is that Edwards was full of joy, a joy that sprung from knowledge of sins forgiven. His house was full of laughter.

McGinley was also mistaken, because Edwards has much to say concerning the great love of the God who himself came to die in our place as our substitute, and who suffered both in life and through death to win our salvation. He suffered in life, argues Edwards, in that the Incarnation itself was even an act of real suffering, arguing that the life of Christ is itself expiatory. Edwards argues in one unpublished sermon

¹⁴ J. Gerstner, *A Mini Theology* (Wheaton, 1987), 11.

¹⁵ I. R. K. Paisley, *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of Revival* (Privately printed, 1987), 7-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ L. Sweet, “Good Sense and Good Humor: The Modern Cult of Common Sense,” (paper presented at the Jonathan Edwards Symposium at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, NJ, 1973).

that Christ's sufferings actually began with the Incarnation, for there was real suffering in his taking upon himself human nature in the "low, weak, debased state in which it is since the fall." It was necessary that the nature he assumed was our present nature, and here Edwards is clearly following the doctrine that only that which is assumed can be redeemed. The nature he took, preaches Edwards, was not as it was before the fall, but

in that broken suffering state where it is since. The human nature since the Fall is but the ruin of what it was formerly, he took the human nature upon him with all its infirmities that it labors under excepting those that have the nature of sin in them he took it on him with those infirmities that are the sad fruits of sin and therefore he is said to have been made in the likeness of sinful flesh, Romans 8:3.¹⁸

McGinley was also mistaken because, in actuality, Edwards' central message was not just that sinners might know God, but that they would come to delight in God, that they would savor him and even relish him. That is why McGinley is so mistaken. That is the element of Edwards that John Piper has done the church such a great service in recovering for us. As Piper says, "For all his intellectual might, Edwards was the farthest thing from a cool, detached, neutral, disinterested academician."¹⁹

In his own *Personal Narrative*, Edwards himself gives us some confirmation of that fact:

The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception . . . which continued near as I can judge about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears and weeping aloud.²⁰

So if McGinley gives us a very distorted picture of Edwards' theology concerning the nature of God, then what would consist of a much more accurate account of Jonathan Edwards the preacher? One starting point would have to be the clear truth in Edwards that redemption was a work involving all three members of the Trinity, together with the belief that one cannot separate the person of Christ from his work. I mention the first aspect because Edwards has several times been a point of attack for those who charge Edwards, as Michael Jenkins does in his doctoral work, with differentiating not simply between the divine hypostases but the

¹⁸ Unpublished sermon on Isaiah 53:7.

¹⁹ J. Piper, "The Pastor as Theologian" (paper presented at the Bethlehem Conference for Pastors, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 15, 1988), 12.

²⁰ *Personal Narrative*.

divine *ousia*, thereby making a “tri-personality” of the Trinity. In fact, Jinkins accuses Edwards of almost breaking up the Trinity into divine subjects whose character may or may not be identical. But as Jinkins himself quotes, “God not only gives us the Mediator and accepts His mediation, and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the Mediator; but he the Mediator is God.”²¹

Following on from this, I want to focus particularly on the second aspect, on that which Edwards is concerned to focus our attention on, and that is the willing, suffering, agonizing nature of the Redeemer, so that it is impossible to separate the glorious person from his gracious work. This is a central concept in Edwards, that the person and work, the incarnation and atonement are bonded together in his thought. That is why we cannot look at the doctrine of the atonement on its own. According to Edwards, Christ has come in our nature, that he might now, “. . . . invite and encourage us to ascend to the most intimate converse with him and encourages us that we shall be accepted and not despised.” Christ took on a nature, “infinitely below his,” that we might have the full position and enjoyment of him.²²

So in Edwards’ thought, the atonement means

that there is now nothing hindering our intimate union and communion with the Godhead, nothing now that will cause the least injury to the honor of the majesty of God, because that majesty has already been fully displayed, vindicated and glorified in Christ’s blood.²³

Here we see something of the richness of the thought of Edwards. Though Christ will be in a state of exaltation in heaven that will not distance him from his disciples, “but he will rather take them into a state of exaltation with him. This will be the improvement Christ will make of his own glory to make his beloved friends partakers with him, to glorify them in his glory”²⁴

The second thing that we find in Edwards is that, following Athanasius, he makes it clear that it is in Christ’s condescension that our ascension lies. Man becomes a member of the household of God because we are admitted by the door, the Son, “that he and his Father and they should be as it were one society, one family, that his people should be in a sort admitted into that society of the three persons in the Godhead.”²⁵ And so, Edwards tells us the church becomes “the daughter of God”.

²¹ Michael Jinkins, *A Comparative Study in the Theology of the Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and John McLeod Campbell* (New York: Mellen Press, 1992), 111.

²² *Miscellany* 741.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

This was in fact the whole reason for the creation of the world according to Edwards. The reason why the church is regarded as God's daughter is because she is the spouse of Christ. In fact, using Matthew 25:1-12, Edwards preaches a lengthy series of sermons which are still unpublished, on the very subject of the church's espousal to Christ and all that flows from that. And in the introductory sermon to that series, this is part of what he teaches,

Hence we learn the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he should receive such poor, unworthy creatures as we are, into such a blessed union with himself. How wonderful is that condescension of such a Divine and infinite glory, that he should seek to espouse worms of the dust and should call little, feeble, poor insects to be his bride.²⁶

This was the heart of the plan and that is why says Edwards, "the Church is said to be the completeness of Christ . . . as if Christ were not complete without the Church, as having a natural inclination thereto. We are incomplete without that which we have a natural inclination to."²⁷

That is the third thing about the work of Christ in Edwards' thought. It is a remarkable statement that Christ could be considered as incomplete without the church, but this is what Edwards says, "Heaven and earth were created that the Son of God might be complete in a spouse." A spouse,

. . . that might enjoy him and on whom he might pour forth his love. This design was according to the wisdom of God, bestowed in such a way as should abase men and exalt the free grace of God. That man's entire and absolute and universal dependence on God should be most evident and conspicuous.²⁸

The last facet of the truth Edwards preaches concerning the work of redemption is that Christ's work is a work which is genuinely offered to all, and if it is rejected, makes everyone thereby inexcusable. So, for example, Edwards preaches,

If God offers you a Saviour from deserved punishment, and you will not receive him, then surely it is just that you should go without a Saviour . . . If, when he has given an infinitely honourable and glorious person, even his only begotten Son, to be a sacrifice for sin, in the fire of his wrath, and so provided salvation, and this Saviour is offered to you, you be not suited in him, and refuse to accept him, is God therefore

²⁶ Unpublished sermon on Matthew 25:1-12.

²⁷ *Miscellany* 104.

²⁸ *Miscellany* 103.

unjust if he does not save you?²⁹

One thing that Edwards also makes crystal clear, is that, “The invitations of the Gospel are always in universal terms.”³⁰

But where does all this take us? What is Edwards hoping to achieve through his preaching? I would argue that it is not primarily obedience, or to fear hell, or even to hope for heaven, but as Edwards himself declares,

The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams. But God is the ocean.³¹

Moses’ Complaint of the Great Burden and Trouble of that Office and Work which God had Appointed Him to of Leading the Children of Israel. February 1739/40

Jonathan Edwards

Numbers 11:10-15

“Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families . . . and Moses said unto the Lord, ‘Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant?’”

I shall depart something from my usual method in discovering from these words. The method I propose to take is this, viz.:

- I. To observe something in the words, and then
- II. To make some reflection on those observations by way of improvement.

I.1. I would observe some things in that portion of Scripture that has been now read. In them is exhibited Moses’ complaint of the great burden and trouble of that office and work which God had appointed him to, of leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness to Canaan. And do ’tis worthy of our observation who the person is that complains. It was Moses, of whom it may here be proper and profitable to take notice of several things:

²⁹ Sermon, “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners.”

³⁰ Sermon, “Great Guilt No Obstacle.”

³¹ *The Christian Pilgrim* (Yale Works; Vol. II), 244.

i. That he was one of the most eminent saints that we have any account of. God Himself seems to speak of him as a far more eminent person and a greater favorite of heaven than ordinary prophets in what God says to Aaron and Miriam when they manifested that they thought they were worthy of as much honor as Moses because God had spoken through them as well as by him. See what God says of Moses on the occasion, Numbers 12:5-8, And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

And there are many other evidences of his great eminency that might be mentioned, the many extraordinary privileges he was found with, as his converse with God on the Mount till his face shone, the high office to which God called him, and his holy behavior on one occasion and another.

ii. He was under God the head of the congregation of the Children of Israel. He was in an extraordinary manner called to be in many respects, the prophet, priest and king of the people, to be their deliverer under God, their redeemer out of Egypt. To be their captain and leader, to be a kind of mediator for them between God and them. To carry their words to God and to bring God's words to them. To be their intercessor, to be instrumentally their lawgiver and their chief judge on earth in all causes, to whom was made the last appeal.

iii. He was the head of the ancient legal dispensation as Christ is of the evangelical, as John observes in John 1:17, The Law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. It was by him that God founded the Israelitish church in that state and economy manner of worship and form of government in which it was under the Old Testament. He was as it were the Father of the Old Testament prophets and the Israelitish church is called the body of Moses as the mystical church is the body of Christ, which is what intended in Jude 9, by Michael disputing with the devil. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee, referring to the dispute in Zechariah 3 at the beginning. The dispute is about Jerusalem as the

Jewish church that were returned from captivity, a brand plucked out of the fire.

iv. In these things he was a very eminent type of Christ, and therefore when God reveals to Moses the future coming of Christ he tells him that he would raise up a prophet like unto him, Deuteronomy 18:15,18, The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

v. We have divine testimony for this that he was the meekest man of all upon the face of the earth, as Numbers 12:3.

vi. His love to that people was very great notwithstanding all their abuses of him, as appears by his doing the part of an intercessor for them from time to time and praying so earnestly for them. And so when they had so greatly provoked God and also provoked the spirit of Moses in making the golden calf and God said unto Moses in Exodus 32:9, Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them that I may consume them, and promises him that he would make a great nation of him though this seemed to be a great honor offered to Moses and very tempting to Moses to be willing that it should be so, yet Moses earnestly besought God to spare the people and forgive them and begs of him that he would turn from his fierce wrath and repent him of the evil and pleads the Covenant that he had made with Abraham, and so God at Moses' intercession repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

And so when the people murmured against Moses and Aaron and seemed to be in such an unreasonable tumult and rage at the report of the spies and Moses had the greatest temptation to be provoked and incensed against them as in Numbers 14:14, yet at that very time when he saw that God was dreadfully provoked with them and God said to Moses in verse 11, How long shall this people provoke me and how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have showed among them. I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. Yet even then Moses earnestly besought God for them and entreated him to spare them and so he turned away his wrath again. So great was his love to the people, that if God would not forgive their sin he prayed, Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written, Exodus 32:32.

2. The second thing that I would observe in the text is what that is which Moses complains of and is unwilling to bear, viz. the burden and trouble of leading that people through the wilderness to the promised land. He objects against it that God should require it of him to do that great and difficult service for the children of God though God should say to him carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers. Though he was so good a man and so full of love to that people yet he is not willing to bear the burden of such a service.

3. We may observe wherein consisted that burdensomeness of this service that Moses objects against and that is the bearing the frowardness and perverseness of that people. They are so froward and so full of their murmuring, so unwilling in their obedience, so prone to rebellion and so unreasonable in their behavior to God and him, that he was not willing to bear the burden of it. This was what Moses was displeased with in verse 10, Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. This is what he objects against in verse 13, Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

4. We may observe how earnestly and to how great a degree he objects against it. Which appears in several things.

i. He complains of it as if it were an argument of God's displeasure against that he had laid it upon it wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight that thou layest the burthen of thy people upon me.

ii. He accounts the burden so great that he doesn't want to see his wretchedness or misery, Let me not see my wretchedness, says he, in verse 15.

iii. He speaks of the burden as quite unbearable, says he in verse 14, I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too hard for me.

iv. He earnestly prays that God would rather kill him out of hand than oblige to this difficult service. He had rather die immediately than live to bear the trouble leading such a forward and perverse people to the land which God had promised them, verse 15.

v. The thing that I would observe in the words is a particular objection by

Moses against its being required of him to bear the perverseness of that people, viz. that he had not conceived nor begotten them, verse 12. As much as to say, If I were the father or the mother of that people there would be more reason why I should be content to bear their frowardness and perverseness and to carry them as a mother or a nursing father carries a very forward or perverse child in his bosom with great love and tenderness notwithstanding all its perverseness as natural parents must bear the frowardness of their children however perverse they be. Let it cost them never so much trouble to lead them and carry them about and bring them up, yet they must do it because they have either begotten or conceived them. But Moses objects that this was not his case with respect to the people of Israel and he earnestly insists that he should be excused from this trouble.

Thus I have done with what I proposed in the first place in discovering from these words, viz. making some observations or remarks on the text.

I come now in the second place,

II. To make some reflection on those things that have been observed in the text by way of improvement, and the reflection that I would make is what has been observed of Moses in the text may lead us to reflect and observe how far the love and patience and kindness Jesus towards his people exceeds that of the meekest and best of men.

Christ is the prophet God raised up like unto Moses as has been already observed. The mystical, universal church is his body as the Israelitish church is the body of Moses. He is the Redeemer of the church from sin and Satan and hell, as Moses was the redeemer of the children of Israel out of Egypt. He is the captain and leader of the hosts of the spiritual Israel, as Moses was the captain and leader of the physical Israel. He is the head of the evangelical dispensation as Moses was of the legal. His office was to lead his people through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly promised land. He is the greater teacher and lawgiver and intercessor of the universal church.

Therefore 'tis the more natural for us to compare the one with the other, to observe how far the meekness and patience and love of one exceeds the other, though the other was so eminent for these things. But that we may be the more distinct and full in this reflection I would mention the exercises of Christ's love towards his people.

1. I would take notice how much otherwise the case was with Christ from what it was with Moses. That would bring indeed the same exercises of

patience and kindness in him more wonderful manifestations of love and grace.

2. Show how the exercises of patience and kindness in Christ towards his people go beyond those of Moses.

3. I would apply this particular to the church of Israel in the wilderness to that visible church in general, and to the universal, mystical church and particular persons.

4.i.a. I would take notice in some instances how much otherwise the case was with Christ than what it was with Moses that would have rendered the same patience and kindness more wonderful in Christ.

b. Christ was an infinitely greater person than Moses. Moses was but a servant in the house of Israel under Christ but Christ is the builder and lord and owner of the house, Hebrews 3:3-6, For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Christ was the God of Moses. He was the person that appeared to Moses in the bush out of reverence to whom Moses pulled off his shoes. He was he that spoke to Moses face to face. Christ is that Angel of the Covenant that was with Moses in the wilderness whose glory Moses entreated that he might see and that he might know his name, and who Moses adored. Acts 7:38 when speaking of Moses says, This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai and with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us.

Christ being so much greater a person than Moses it is a more wonderful instance of condescension in him to bear the frowardness and perverseness of his people than it was for Moses who was only a fallen worm. It was a greater instance of condescension in him to undertake the burden of bringing such a perverse people to the promised land.

c. Christ has infinitely greater injury received him from the frowardness and perverseness of men than Moses had. Moses indeed was very much abused. They murmured against him time after time though he had done

them no wrong but was the greatest benefactor under Christ that they had in the world. They unreasonably wearied him and often were in a fiendish rage with him. But Christ is far more injured by the perverseness of men than Moses was. The perverseness of their heart is more especially leveled against him and their enmity is chiefly against Christ, this Moses himself observed in Exodus 16:8, And what are we? Your murmurings are not against us but against the Lord.

And also as 'tis an infinitely greater injury and provocation to oppose Christ than to oppose Moses therefore the same forbearance is proportionably and manifestly of more wonderful patience in him than it was in Moses. To be froward towards a fallen worm is but a little thing in comparison of what it is to show perverseness against the infinitely glorious Lord of heaven and earth. And therefore for the former to be borne patiently is not to be compared with a forbearance under the latter.

d. Moses as he was in himself was a fellow offender but that is not so with Christ. It would have been no such great thing for Moses in his goodness to have overcome the perverseness of Israel, for he was only a fellow servant and as he was in himself under the same condemnation for he wholly had the same perverse and froward heart in him, and also was in many things guilty himself. He manifested his perverseness when God first called him to send him to the children of Israel in his continuing so manifestly to object against it when God had commanded him again and again to go, and gave him so much encouragement to go. And in the text he is not altogether without perverseness and the perverseness of his heart was again manifest at the waters of Meribah. So that he had never had such a corrupt view of his own might. But Christ who is Lord of all had no sin, never had any perverseness in his heart, never in any wise offended God or offered any such offence to men, for him therefore to exercise love and patience towards perverse worms or rather, a generation of vipers was the more wonderful.

e. Moses was under obligation to kindness and forbearance towards that people but Christ in his original circumstances was free. No thanks to Moses for exercising love and kindness towards a perverse congregation for he was naturally in a state of subjection to God and God required this of him necessity was laid upon him, yea woe to him if he did not love and bear this froward people.

But Christ as he naturally and originally is free from any subjection and exercises no love or forbearance towards his people but what is the fruit of his free and sovereign grace. These things would have rendered the

same acts of kindness and forbearance in Christ far wonderful manifestations of grace and patience in Christ than in Moses. But I come

ii. To show how the exercises of patience and kindness in Christ towards his people so beyond those of Moses. Not only do the different circumstances render his acts of forbearance and kindness more wonderful but the acts of patience and love in themselves are far beyond those of Moses.

a. Christ bears with all the frowardness of his people. Many of his own redeemed people before their conversion behaved with as great perverseness as the worst of that congregation and yet Christ never punishes them for it but after they continued long in a froward and obstinate opposition to him he convicts them and wholly forgives them and bestows Canaan upon them. With many thousands and millions of perverse sinners does Christ deal thus. And he bears all the frowardness that all his people are guilty of after their conversion, after he has bestowed such infinite mercy upon them, yet he never forsakes them, whom he loves he loves to the end. His mercy endures forever towards them.

Moses bore the perverseness of the congregation of Israel a great while, but at last their frowardness continuing of so many means used with then he can bear it no longer, he quite gives out. Christ never gives out, his patience never fails, though they often behave themselves very ungratefully after his redeeming them out of the spiritual Egypt with a strong hand. Yet he bears their frowardness through the wilderness till he brings them to the land of promise.

b. Christ carries them to the promised land in his bosom as a nursing father does a sucking child. This was what Moses was unwilling for and objected so strenuously against, Have I begotten them that thou shouldest say unto me Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers?

But Christ freely does it though they are froward children. Isaiah 40:11, He shall lead his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom. Christ with great long-suffering and love towards his people as a mother bears a little child, Isaiah 66:13, As one when his mother comforteth so will I comfort them. So Christ when on earth was often wont to call his people his little children, and bear with all their unbelief and childish instability and cowardice and dullness and backwardness to their duty, so Isaiah 63:8-9, For he said, Surely they

are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. Moses said to God, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant that thou hast laid the burden of this people upon me? But Christ was willingly afflicted and tormented for the sake of a perverse people, his enemies.

c. Moses was unwilling to do the service of the temporal salvation of Israel, he suffered so much by their perverseness. But Christ undertook the eternal salvation of his people though he therein he suffered much more by their perverseness. All the dreadful sufferings that Christ underwent when on earth were the fruits of his people's frowardness and perverseness. The iniquity of them was laid upon him. He bore the burden of all the rebellion and perverseness of all his people that have been committed from the beginning to the end of the world in his own body and soul that he might by that means bring them to the heavenly Canaan. He bore a thousand times as much as Moses would have needed to have begun to carry.

d. Christ was willing to bear all this burden himself alone. What Moses very much objected against bearing the burden the perverseness of that people alone. Christ is the only Savior of his Church. He had none to bear a part with him in that exceeding great and difficult work of bringing his elect to the heavenly Canaan. He was alone in bearing all that dreadful affliction that was the fruit of that perverseness. He bore it all in his own body. It all fell upon him, the whole weight of the affair came upon his shoulders, all the floodgates of Divine wrath were opened upon him. All God's wrath was spent on his soul. There was none to fit to lift a finger to help bear a part, Isaiah 63:3, I have trodden the winepress alone and of the people there was none with me.

e. Moses grievously complains of the burden laid upon him, but Christ never complained of the vastly greater burden that was laid upon him. He never once objected against it when God called him to this work. He readily made answer, Lo! I come. I delight to do thy will O God! Though he knew that the work would be exceeding difficult and cost him so dear, yet such was his love to his people that he thought of it with delight. He could not bear to hear any objection against it when Peter objected against his undergoing so much, crying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee, Matthew 16:22, he rejected his objection with abhorrence, Matthew 16:23, But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the

things that be of God, but those that be of men.

f. Moses gave that reason he need not bear their frowardness, that he had not begotten nor conceived them. But Christ just loved them and bore their sins and frowardness that he might beget them and be a father to them. He loved them when he had not begotten nor conceived them. He loved them when they were aliens and strangers and enemies so as to undertake to bear immeasurably more for them than Moses bore and had need to bear for Israel. His suffering the fruits of the perverseness of his people were the fruits of that love that Christ had to them before he begat them and he suffered to make way for their being spiritually begotten by him and so becoming his children and that so he might be their nursing father and that he might bear with them under all their perverseness consistent with the honor of his holiness and justice.

g. Moses desired to be killed to be delivered from bearing the burden of the sins of the Children of Israel, but such was Christ's love to his people that he desired to be killed that he might bear, take the burden of their perverseness upon him. Moses desired to be killed rather than have the ungrateful service of carrying such an untoward people to Canaan, but Christ desired to be killed that he might thereby bring them to the spiritual Canaan on that day by that service which he did not account an ungrateful work but a delightful one notwithstanding all their ungrateful and untoward opposition to him.

h. Moses' patience was worn out before he had born the frowardness of Israel for two years but Christ's patience holds to his elect church from the beginning to the end of the world. It was not yet two years since Moses was first sent but . . . Christ beholds all the sin and notwithstanding all wrongs and murmurings and never has destroyed it.

III. I come now in the third and last place to apply this reflection particularly to the children of Israel in the wilderness to the visible people of Israel in general, and to the mystical church or to particular persons.

1. What has been observed in the text may lead us to take notice how much the patience of Christ towards the children of Israel in the wilderness exceeded Moses. He was the principal object of all their murmurings but did not cast them off as a people from being his people. They provoked Christ, grieved and vexed his Holy Spirit for forty years in the wilderness, yet Christ bore them as a nursing father does a sucking child. Deuteronomy 1:31, And in the wilderness where thou hast seen

how the Lord thy God bore thee as one doth bear his son in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

2. This may show us how much the love and patience of Christ exceeds that of the best and meekest of men. If we consider Christ's dealings and his visible people in general, Moses did only suffer such kind of treatment in His visible church during that forty years but that is commonly such kind of treatment offered Christ in that visible church in all ages.

3. If we consider Christ's dealings towards his elect church in all ages. For those he has died. The punishment of all their frowardness he has born in his body. Bears with all.

4. This should lead particular persons to consider how much Christ's forbearance and kindness towards them exceeds that of the meekest and best of men towards any. Consider how often you have rejected him, cast contempt upon him when he has stood at your door. How much kindness you have received and then abused. And then Christ has renewed his calls; has corrected you; has given you influences of his Spirit; has given you many special advantages; has renewed his calls and winning invitations setting forth the glory of his benefits; given you very considerable illuminations. Yet Christ bears with you. If you are one that is one of the mystical church of Christ, then consider how great sins before conversion; how much is this kindness beyond all; and how great your frowardness since.

Let these things be considered now by every one that is about to sit down at the table of the Lord and to attend the solemn memorial of his wonderful love to such froward and perverse creatures as we are.